LAND FOR WILDLIFE

SOUTH EAST QUEENSLAND

MAY 2026 VOL. 20 NO. 2

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

2 Land for Wildlife Team

3 Editorial

3 Climate & Weather Outlook

3 Weeds to Watch

4 Coastal Carpet Pythons

5 Tipping the Balance in Favour of Native Plants

6-7 Weeds! Weeds! Weeds!: A guide to staying positive and inspired

8-9 Wanted Dead or Alive: The Value of Old Trees for Gliders

10-11 Odonata for Beginners

12 Letters to the Editor

13 Book Reviews

14-15 Capturing Cryptic Creatures: Using fauna cameras on private properties

16 Please contribute to this National Research Project

Using Fauna Cameras p. 14

Detecting Greater Gliders p.8

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Land for Wildlife South East Queensland Team
February 2026

Land for wildlife SOUTH EAST QUEENSLAND SNAPSHOT

5,725 TOTAL PROPERTIES

4,590 REGISTERED PROPERTIES

1,135 PROPERTIES working towards RESTORATION

88,006ha RETAINED HABITAT

10,479ha Habitat Under RESTORATION

120,420 iNaturalist OBSERVATIONS

18,108 Facebook Followers

www.inaturalist.org/projects/lfwseq

To join contact your local LfW Officer

Land for Wildlife South East Queensland acknowledges this Country and its Traditional Custodians. We acknowledge and respect the spiritual relationship between Traditional Custodians and this Country, which has inspired language, songs, dances, lore and dreaming stories over many thousands of years. We pay our respects to the Elders, those who have passed into the dreaming; those here today; those of tomorrow. May we continue to peacefully walk together in gratitude, respect and kindness in caring for this Country and one another.

Land for Wildlife is a voluntary conservation program that encourages and assists landholders to provide habitat for wildlife on their properties.

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EDITORIAL

Welcome TO THE MAY 2026 ISSUE

The Greater Glider is Australia's largest, and the world's second largest, gliding mammal, second only to the Giant Flying Squirrel of south-east Asia. Over the past year, populations have been found on more than ten Land for Wildlife properties. Some of these populations were previously unknown, making these discoveries exciting and reinforcing the vital role that Land for Wildlife properties play in providing homes for our wildlife.

I've been fortunate to see Greater Gliders several times while spotlighting. Each sighting brings home the fact that every hollow-bearing tree, alive or dead, is a valuable home for our gliders.

These recent discoveries highlight the powerful contributions LfWSEQ members can make to conservation, citizen science and scientific research. Carolyn and Stephen's story (pgs. 8-9) attests to the importance of old trees and the value of getting involved in research projects wherever possible.

I encourage all LfWSEQ members to take some time to complete the third and final survey of a national research project. While surveys may not appeal to everyone, this one will hopefully build a compelling case for the LfWSEQ program's value for both the wellbeing of members and their properties. You can access the survey via the QR code or link on the back page.

Chad's timely article (pgs. 6-7) reminds us to stay positive and that there is always something new to learn about nature. Connecting to the natural world is an antidote to worrying world news and there are positives just waiting for us underneath the weeds.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the outstanding contribution of Martin Bennett to the LfWSEQ program. Working as a LfW Officer at various councils for over 15 years, Martin visited, connected and inspired hundreds of LfW members. His enthusiasm and ecological knowledge fostered a strong sense of stewardship contributing to significant conservation outcomes, including the signing of numerous Nature Refuge covenants. Martin resigned from Locker Valley Regional Council earlier this year, but his conservation legacy endures and he continues to work as a respected ecologist. Thankyou Martin.

Thanks to all contributors to this edition. Contributions however big or small are always welcome.

Deborah Metters
Land for Wildlife Regional Coordinator

We welcome all contributions.
Please send them to:
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0437 910 687

Climate & Weather
REGIONAL OUTLOOK May - Jun 2026

Daytime and Night-time Temperatures.
Above average daytime and night-time temperatures are very likely.

Rainfall. Rainfall is likely to be below average.

Streamflow. Near median to low streamflows are forecast.

Climate Influences

- There is a possible shift to El Niño by the end of winter.
- The Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) is neutral.
- Sea surface temperatures during Feb 2026 were the third warmest on average globally. Warmer than average waters persist of the east coast of Australia. Warmer oceans can enhance the severity of storms, cyclones and rain systems.

Sources
www.bom.gov.au/climate/outlooks/ and www.bom.gov.au/water/ssf/

Weeds to Watch May - Jun 2026

Just what we need, another weedy passionfruit vine!

Passiflora adenopoda is a new weed in SEQ, found recently at Tamborine Mountain. Look for large lobed leaves with fine hairs, big white flowers with purple banded filaments, notable glands at leaf base (pictured) and large oval-shape fruit. If you find this species, please report it and control manually or with herbicide.

Photos by Greg Tasney.

CORRECTION

In the article, *Catchment Management* (February 2026 Vol 20 No 1) something went wrong between approvals and printing and two images were flipped upside down. Apologies to Ian Hannam – his article deserved to have all the images easily visible to show the great work he has done to minimise soil erosion on his property. Here they are again, right way up. Our apologies.

Rocky silt traps reduce the water flow energy and trap silt, enabling plants like lomandras to become established.

Coastal Carpet Pythons

Land for Wildlife member, Martin, wasn't too surprised when he sighted a quite swollen Coastal Carpet Python (*Morelia spilota* subspecies *mcdowelli*) around his house at Anstead and assumed this was the result of its last meal. What he didn't expect to find a week later in his compost mound was a female python curled around a clutch of eggs, nor a second female at the opposite end of the same mound, also curled around her eggs. Needless to say, Martin carefully re-covered both pythons and gave up on the idea of mulch spreading for the next couple of months.

Reptiles, in general, aren't known for caring for their young, but some python species are very attentive mothers. Carpet Pythons lay a clutch of somewhere between 10-50 leathery eggs in late spring to early summer and then stay with them until they hatch around 8 weeks later. During this time, they protect their eggs and also help to incubate them by wrapping their body around them. This isn't just passive. If needed, they'll bask in the sun to raise their body temperature and use this stored thermal energy to aid egg incubation. On top of this, they will also shiver to produce body heat to keep their eggs warm. Despite these various strategies the overall hatching time is still largely influenced by the ambient temperature. In the cool environment of Mt Glorious, a Coastal Carpet Python was recorded incubating her eggs for 111 days before they hatched.

This attentiveness comes at a cost, as females don't feed during this time and can lose up to a quarter of their body weight. Upon hatching all parental responsibility ceases and the around 30cm long hatchlings are on their own.

Mating for Coastal Carpet Pythons occurs from the end of winter into spring. This rarely witnessed event is initiated when a male wraps around a receptive female. In contrast, what is more commonly seen and mistaken for mating, is territorial disputes between males as they assert dominance for the right to mate. These are quite energetic encounters, unlike mating, as the rivals constantly twist and coil around each other and push each other to the ground. Eventually one will give up, leaving the winner the right to mate with females in its territory.

Adult Coastal Carpet Pythons can reach a very impressive 4 metres (they are the largest subspecies of Carpet Python), but the norm is closer to the 2 to 2.5 metre mark with females being a bit smaller than males. At this size they are at the top of the food chain with very few natural predators. Smaller pythons however are preyed upon by various animals. They also face human threats including car strike, habitat loss and the poisonous Cane Toad. That said, the Coastal Carpet Python has largely adapted well to human habitat change and they are frequently found even in highly urbanised areas. Unfortunately, there is another potential looming threat - Boid Inclusion Body Disease (BIBD) caused by a Reptarenavirus. As at writing, this fatal disease has only been found in captive pythons in Australia.

The common name, Carpet Python, refers to their striking carpet-like patterning. The patterning of Coastal Carpet Pythons, like their very broad range - along the coastal fringe from Cape York Peninsula to northern NSW and the equally broad habitats they occupy, is also highly variable. Dorsal (topside) colouration varies from brown to grey to olive which is broken up by mottling, blotches and lines. Colour morphs also naturally occur. Some interbreeding between the Diamond Python (subspecies *spilota*) also happens where their ranges overlap leading to more, but fairly localised, patterning variation. Depending on which taxonomic database you use, there are 6-8 subspecies of Carpet Pythons.

These large, slow-moving snakes are active during the day and night and are adept climbers. They typically eat warm blooded animals which they sense primarily using heat sensitive pits on their snout and lower jaw. They'll occasionally take reptiles and amphibians (these are a far more important component of a young python's diet) using that other snake associated sensory organ – their forked tongue and Jacobson's organ to hunt these cold-blooded animals.

Carpet Pythons are quite reclusive, but like most snakes, can, and will bite if they feel threatened. Having a mouthful of around 100 sharp recurved teeth, their bite can be painful, but they are non-venomous. If you come across a Carpet Python, show respect and give it a bit of room, that is all that's needed for a memorable wildlife encounter.

Tony Mlynarik
Land for Wildlife Officer
Brisbane City Council

References and Further Reading

Atlas of Living Australia – bie.ala.org.au

Queensland Museum – museum.qld.gov.au

Snake Catchers Brisbane - snakecatchers.com.au

Wildlife Health Australia - wildlifehealthaustralia.com.au

Wildlife Queensland – wildlifeqld.com.au

One of two female Coastal Carpet Pythons wrapped around their eggs in a pile of mulch on Martin's Land for Wildlife property at Anstead.

This Coastal Carpet Python was quite content wrapped around the washing line on Donna and Trevor Greaves' Land for Wildlife property at Coominya earlier this year. It was a stunning yellow colour.

TIPPING THE BALANCE IN FAVOUR OF Native Plants

Barb acquired 5 1/2 hectares at Christmas Creek in 2002. The property had been a gravel quarry and consisted of two bare, sloping, weedy paddocks and three dry creek beds at the time of purchase.

Weeds were a problem. Most obvious at that stage was lantana, and we set about getting rid of it by cutting stems and applying herbicide. During that period of the Millennium Drought, eradication appeared easy. However, the nature of the terrain necessitated the use of previously learned bushwalking and rock-climbing techniques, notably abseiling. The latter presented some difficulty, because one was necessarily encumbered by shears, poison etc.. I recall abseiling off the end of the rope whilst engrossed in locating the base of a particularly tangled lantana.

Another principle which guided our efforts was that we should try to retain water on the property. This was accomplished by riparian planting, mainly of Hoop Pines, callistemons, melaleucas and lomandras. We also placed obstacles such as logs and boulders in creek beds.

At this late stage of 2025, drought is not a problem, though doubtless it will be again. Our experience is that the worst weeds are: 1) Lantana 2) Glycine 3) Leucaena and 4) Chinese Elm.

The exercise has given rise to some questions; notably, "What is a weed?" A weed is a plant in the wrong place, but our rule of thumb is that if a plant is taking over from native plants, it deserves eradication. Our observation after all this time is that one should seek to tip the balance in favour of plants which we assume existed here before European colonisation.

It's easy to be overwhelmed by the magnitude of the task. In general, the phrase "Land for Wildlife" encapsulates the principle that if the creatures who lived there before our arrival are happy, something must be going right. Although one must be vigilant and never relax in the battle against encroachment by species of plant which don't belong, over time restoration becomes easier.

A distillation of our learning over the years would be:

- Don't plant exotics.
- Keep indigenous animals, birds and insects happy.
- Retain water.
- Get rid of the invasive plants.

Our experience has left us in awe of the intricacy of systems represented in the bush. Although our knowledge is extremely limited, it is gratifying to try to improve things.

Article and photos by
Barb McGuire and Lionel Hartley
Land for Wildlife members
Christmas Creek, Scenic Rim

2010

2026

Photos from 2010 and 2026 of the property show the return of native plants and healthy ecosystems. A Pacific Baza (right) was a welcomed visitor.

Weeds! Weeds! Weeds!

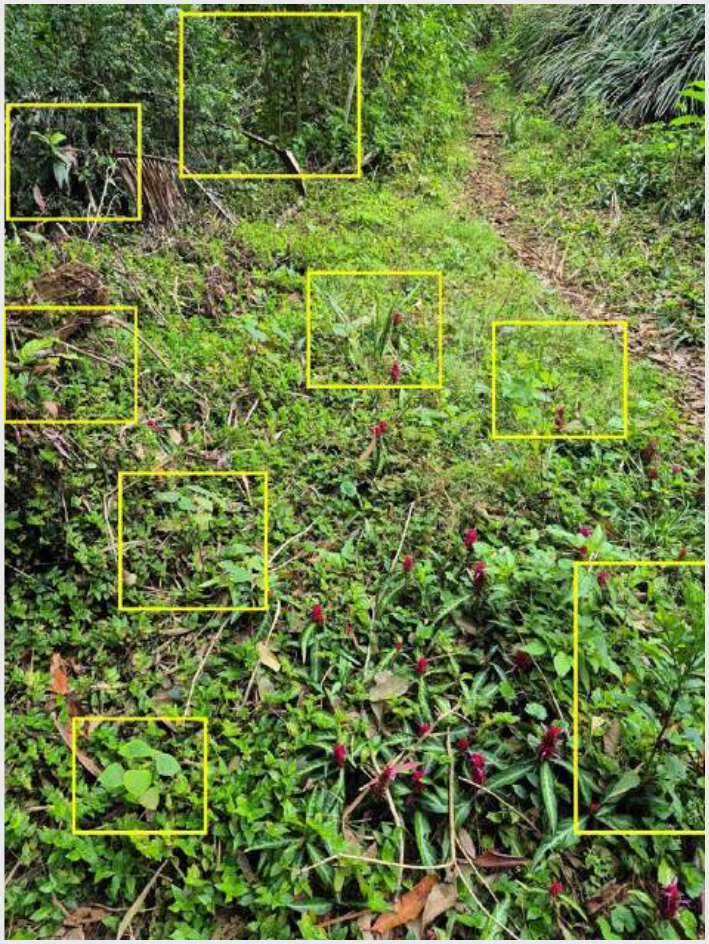
A GUIDE TO STAYING POSITIVE AND INSPIRED

Lantana in the gully, morning glory on the edge, trad on the forest floor, paspalum creeping in and green panic all around!

We wage an unrelenting war, but every time we turn around, the enemy grows and grows. The weeds spread, new weeds appear and no matter how many big whacks we give the unwanted invaders, they seem to be totally undaunted. Some days we want to huddle in our abodes, not daring to peek out of the window for fear of impending home invasion. They were right about the triffids!!! Nothing to do but Netflix binge!

But (and this story was always leading up to a 'but') what if I told you that despite the lantana, morning glory, trad and myriad other weeds, you had a diverse rainforest waiting to emerge in plain sight? What if I told you that, despite the panic and paspalum, native grasses were gaining hold under the emerging eucalypt canopy? What if I told you that within your bed of trad, native macaranga and bleeding heart seedlings were stretching their leaves to the light?

You would have to believe me. Because it's true! How do I know? Because Australian plants and animals, isolated for millions upon millions of years have adapted to the unique soil, geology and climatic shifts characteristic of this region. Sure, the devastation that weeds have wreaked on our native ecosystems is real and profound, but lost in the doom and gloom, we forget the resilience that millions of years of evolution has forged. In amongst the exotic grasses of your eucalypt forest, you are likely not only to find native plant assemblages holding on, but a soil seed bank of future generations waiting for their turn to see the light. And as you look closer into the privet and camphor thickets on your block, you begin to spot the natives whose fruit native birds have not lost the taste for.



Rather than succumbing to the rage that weeds inspire, we can employ a more measured approach by focusing our energy finding native grasses, looking for indications of a good seedbank and identifying the native seedlings and saplings that can form the backbone of a future forest. These elements of native resilience are working, competing, waiting 24/7 for an opportunity to take hold - our job is not to blindly kill their enemy, but to strategically aid their already herculean efforts. They need our direct and immediate help that is not provided when we make weeds alone our focus.

Sounds good, right? But how do we do that?

Well, in no way, shape or form do I lay claim to full knowledge of the restoration sphere, but I've had the amazing privilege of working as a bush regenerator for 15 years and a few general themes have emerged consistently. First, 'bush regenerator' is a real thing! In keeping my CV up-to-date, I've tried to euphemise the title in various ways. Field ecologist? Restoration expert? Bushland Restoration Officer (just call me 'BRO')? They don't fit, and ultimately the best way to get around the issue is to find dignity in the title 'bush regenerator' and own the epitaph proudly. From contractors to landholders, we all are bush regenerators. Below I've written what I call 'Five Principles of Happy Bush Regenerating' that I feel underpin what it is to be a bush regenerator.

Of course, these principles can be parsed out in different ways, expanded upon and refined. Entire books have been written about the subject. But I hope that the overall message is clear. Rather than fight the unwinnable battle of eliminating all weeds, our mission as bush regenerators is to delve into unlocking the seemingly infinite power of resilience. In the process we open ourselves to a deeper understanding of the bush that is both practical and personal. So the next time you look at your bushland block, switch focus and see the native regeneration as the backbone of a future forest that stretches beyond your imagination. Don't let the weeds hijack your positive experience - let yourself be inspired by your natives and you will forever enjoy your time in the bush!

Chad Oliver
Land for Wildlife Officer
Sunshine Coast Council

On first glance, this is a hopeless bed of trad, broad-leaf paspalum and herbaceous weedy riff-raff. But, looking closely, the future is bright.

The lomandras, bleeding hearts, guioas and quandongs (boxed in yellow) tell a different story. They speak of a forest that can evolve in a few years with only enough work to make sure that our natives continue their upward trajectory.

Bleeding Heart and Poison Peach, with their bird-dispersed fruits, are often the first pioneer species to appear. But did you know that tiny, hard Poison Peach seed can stay in the soil seed bank for years? This Poison Peach may have been waiting patiently for decades in the soil for the right disturbance to guide it towards the light. Photo by Chad Oliver.

Not all weeds are a problem. For example, some Land for Wildlife members choose to leave Tobacco Bush plants in place. They provide shade in open sites and encourage fruit-eating birds, like Brown Fruit-doves. These birds deposit native plant (and weed) seeds beneath the Tobacco Bush, in nice nutrient rich droppings. Over time, the Tobacco Bush dies out leaving the other plants that were allowed to germinate under its canopy. Selective weeding can then be done around the native seedlings. Let the birds and weeds volunteer to help your bush regeneration.

Picking your weed battles is especially important if you live somewhere where the birds will constantly be bringing in weed seeds from nearby areas. For example, Silvereyes love to eat lantana and weedy asparagus seeds (as shown above). They can transport these seeds for kilometres dropping them on your freshly weeded bushland areas. Photos by Deborah Metters.

Five Principles of Happy Bush Regenerating

1) Learn your natives and protect them!

Australia has plants with some of the most amazing adaptations in the world. Identify them and let the dopamine wash in when you find them. You may be lucky enough to have a species list of 200 plants on your property. Learn one a week and in four short years, you'll know all of them. As you learn who your plants are, you'll understand their life cycles, where they like to grow and which animals they directly support. Attaching names is our human way of giving them meaning and letting them tell their story.

2) Sometimes you just have to let go!

Weeds are a symptom of something that you may or may not be able to control. Edges give weeds that compete in full light a competitive advantage. Disturbed soil profiles often haven't developed the underground structure and microbiome for long-term natives to develop (yet). Nutrient-rich seepage areas from upstream promote non-local plants that are better adapted to utilise higher amounts of nitrogen and potassium. In these areas, weed eradication, even if feasible, may only lead to re-colonisation of weeds without a significant input from yourself. In these scenarios, limiting the damage that weeds do and restricting the infiltration into your good bushland areas may be the only short to medium-term course of action.

3) Observe the ecosystem services your weeds provide.

While the end state of any regeneration strategy is to create native systems, weeds do play vital intermediate roles. In a forest with few pioneers, wild tobaccos may provide quick cover and bring in feasting native pigeons that deposit the next generation of native plants. Large camphors on creek banks hold the very foundations of riparian forests together and keep waterways intact for long stretches. In a planting, a thick herbaceous and grassy weed layer in between planted stock regulates soil moisture and surface temperature, allowing soil microbiology to develop in a way that may ultimately supports a native forest. Weeds are performing a function - see if you can find out what it is and if it is useful for the native plants and animals on your land.

4) Pick your battles wisely.

Inevitably there will be somewhere on your block where native nodes are battling it out along fronts of weedy incursion. Find these spots and start by giving native plants the room to grow and spread. Uncover saplings from lantana and privet and handweed around clusters of native grasses, exposing surrounding soil to allow for seed to fall in the upcoming summer. As you work over several visits, look at your native regeneration and think about what it is telling you. Acacias and poison peaches may be evidence of a soil seed bank that was just waiting for the disturbance you created when you pulled out the privet, lantana or other weed. Observe!

5) Timing and resource allocation is key.

Mobilisation of massive forces for enemy slaughter once a year may have less of an impact than more frequent and targeted sweeps. A well-timed spray of broad-leaved paspalum may limit the weed spread by a year. Quick, but frequent sweeps to handweed morning glory may prevent spread up into the canopy. Deferring your weed control strategically may reduce how hard you have to work. For example, painstakingly hand-weeding a bed of thousands of privet seedlings germinating simultaneously at ground level can be delayed until those seedlings undergo a process of mass competition-fuelled fratricide, reducing their numbers by orders of magnitude so that 6 months later the job is reduced to plucking out a few dozen seedlings at thigh height.

WANTED DEAD OR ALIVE

The Value of Old Trees for Gliders

Yellow-bellied Gliders are very elusive but their distinctive call can make their presence known. Listen to it on the Queensland Glider Network Facebook page. https://www.facebook.com/share/v/1TugxnGDMA/ Photo by Josh Bowell.

Twenty-two years ago, while looking for land, we came across a very weedy property. It had beautiful views, but lantana had formed thick walls, climbing up wattle trees and spreading everywhere. We macheted our way through the tall lantana to reach a creek bed that was dry as it was the peak of the Millennium Drought. The place had potential, but it would require a great deal of work.

We continued exploring and came across an area where lantana stretched as far as the eye could see. Seeing this sea of lantana nearly turned us off buying the entire block. However, the sweeping mountain views and glimpses of fine trees among the lantana convinced us to go ahead with the purchase.

Dead trees were such an important habitat feature, so we wanted to protect them. We decided to name each tree after artists. One dead tree stood alone in the area where lantana extended in every direction. We named this tree Nolan.

Fast forward 20 years later and that paddock that nearly turned us off the place is now tall with eucalypts and the dead standing tree called Nolan ended up having a Greater Glider living in it! The Greater Glider was spotted as part of an Australian Government funded National Environmental Science Program (NESP) project that we are participating in. The NESP project is a three-year research collaboration between James Cook University, University of Tasmania and four Local Governments in SEQ – Logan, Gold Coast, Moreton Bay, and our local council, Scenic Rim Regional Council. You can find out more about it on the NESP Resilient Landscapes Hub website.

To explain how our involvement in this project came about, it helps to provide some background information. One night, while sitting around the campfire, we heard the strangest call. We had no idea what it was. Was it a strange flying fox or something we did not recognise, like a fox or a quoll? No.

Later, on a Queensland Glider Network Facebook page we heard the call again and realised that it could be the call of the Yellow-bellied Glider. We mentioned this to our Land for Wildlife Officer, Catherine Madden, and she agreed that we might have these large but elusive gliders.

Catherine organised for our property to be visited as part of the NESP project by James Cook University researchers, Michael Tervo and Maaike Hofman. They confirmed that our property had potential as habitat for Yellow-bellied and Greater Gliders. We were so excited.

They then organised a visit from a Greater Glider detection dog, Austin, and his handler, Marcus, along with Michael Tervo and Greg Tasney from the Conservation Partnerships Team at Scenic Rim Regional Council. Austin sniffed around the base of the old dead standing tree, Nolan, and indicated that there was a Greater Glider scat present. It was tiny, and we would never have found it among the leaves without Austin and Marcus. The scat was only about 5mm in size. Koala scat was also found.

A spotlighting night was organised with Greg Tasney and Josh Bowell to look for Yellow-bellied Gliders. Sadly, Michael could not attend due to other commitments. Greg is a walking encyclopedia of plant knowledge, and he showed us how to take better photos for identification on iNaturalist. His tip was to include my finger in the picture, which allowed the phone to focus closely on the leaves, and to take multiple photos. We waited till it was dark and then started spotlighting.

Greg and Josh showed us an interesting technique called spotlighting where you sweep the torch across the trees to look for eyeshine. Most mammals and nocturnal birds have distinctive eyeshine which will be obvious in the torchlight. Greg quickly spotted a Greater Glider munching on leaves in Nolan just near the hollow. It remained quite relaxed while we tried to get a better angle for a photo, with Josh using his enormous zoom lens.

We continued walking and spotlighting and saw some eyeshine, but no, that was a huntsman spider. It became clear that we were with very skilled scientists and we would not have spotted any gliders without them. As we walked along, Josh played the Yellow-bellied Glider call. Suddenly, he told us he had heard a reply. We stood quietly, listening and watching, but no luck.

We walked a little further, and Josh was confident he knew which tree the glider was in. We looked at the tree from different angles but still had no luck spotting it. The Blue Gum was in bloom and the glider must have been snacking on the nectar in the blossoms.

Suddenly, Josh confirmed that he had seen it, and we managed to get a photo as well. If you have ever tried bird photography with a long lens, imagine looking up into the tallest tree and zooming in on a glider in the dark. Josh was very skilled and captured a great photo.

We name all of our old habitat trees after artists. This one shown in these top three images is Nolan. It might be dead, but it is still invaluable to wildlife and is even home to a Greater Glider. When we bought this property, Nolan was drowning in metres of lantana (below), which we have since cleared.

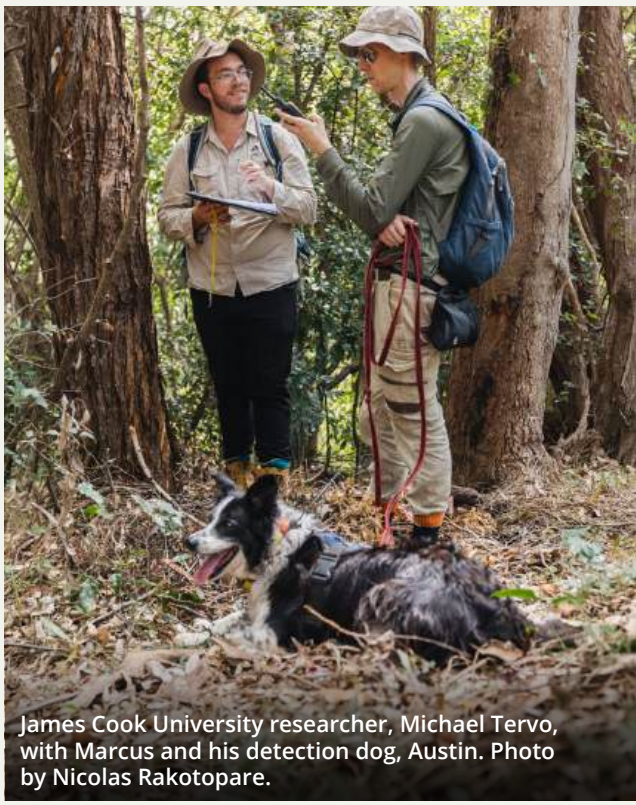
Bush regeneration is hard work, as every Land for Wildlife member would know. We are excited that, within a relatively short period of time, the number of plant and animal species on our once almost-entirely weedy property, has expanded rapidly. Our property can now support endangered species such as the Greater Glider, Yellow-bellied Glider and Koalas.

Tips:

- Learn the Yellow-bellied Glider call in case you hear it.
- Keep and protect any precious dead trees and hollows. Clear the lantana around them to reduce the risk of fire. Naming them helps highlight their significance.
- iNaturalist is easier to use for amateurs than you might think. The AI suggests an identification based on the photo you upload, and a person then confirms it.
- Jump at any chance to connect with amazing scientists and Land for Wildlife Officers.

Article by Carolyn and Stephen
Land for Wildlife members
Scenic Rim Region

Detection dogs are often used in threatened species recovery projects to help detect the presence of elusive animals like Greater Gliders. The dogs are trained to detect tiny traces of the target animal and will usually sit down or indicate in other ways to show their handler that they have detected the target animal. They usually provide positive indications for scats (droppings), fur, remains or the animal itself if it is hidden in a hollow. Detection dogs are a much more efficient and effective way of surveying for Greater Gliders compared to spotlighting. For more information on this NESP project, visit https://nesplandscapes.edu.au/



James Cook University researcher, Michael Tervo, with Marcus and his detection dog, Austin. Photo by Nicolas Rakotopare.

Greater Glider scats are tiny but detection dogs can sniff them out.

Odonata for Beginners

Graphic Flutterers can form colourful swarms at certain times of the year.

One of the rewards of caring for a Land for Wildlife property is watching the wildlife return. First, big birds like magpies and kookaburras arrived and then as cover grew, smaller forest birds such as honeyeaters moved in. Marsupials started to arrive – wallabies, kangaroos, bandicoots and gliders. We responded by adding nesting boxes. Recording what we saw became a focus and it showed the progress we were making. As we learnt about butterflies, our plantings changed to include species preferred by Lepidoptera. We learnt to look and we noticed seasonal changes such as migratory species and breeding behaviours.

But what were those swift moving, elegant insects? Closer encounters revealed a variety of colours, shapes, wing movements and behaviours. We had discovered the insect order Odonata. Known as 'odonates', it includes dragonflies and damselflies. But not all odonates were the same. Some were red. Some were blue. A sudden awareness of these majestic insects quickly turned into a passion for us.

Our first encounter was a squadron of fluttering and floating yellow and black dragonflies hovering above a large fig tree. With lots of patience, a half decent photograph and some researching, our first Graphic Flutterers were bagged. So, the journey began and we started to look. But what were we looking for?

Dragonfly or Damselfly?

The Queensland Museum literature tells us that there are 115 species of dragonfly and damselfly in south-east Queensland.

The Queensland Naturalists' Club has produced an excellent guide called *Brisbane's Common Odonata* that is available free from their website. In the guide they list some features to help distinguish dragonfly from damselfly.

Dragonflies:

- Are usually larger and more robust than damselflies.
- Fly more directly, rather than flutter like damselflies.
- Hold their wings flat while perching, while damselflies hold their wings closed above their bodies.
- Have hindwings of a different shape than forewings, whereas damselflies wings are very similar.
- Have eyes that are much closer together (sometimes even touching), while damselflies' eyes are usually clearly separated.

Of course, there are always exceptions to the rules.

Anatomy

Like all insects, odonates have three body parts – head, thorax and abdomen. The head has a pair of large eyes and a pair of short antennae. The thorax has three segments, each with a set of legs. The last two segments of the thorax each have a pair of wings. Markings on the thorax can be helpful for identification. The abdomen is made up of many segments. The tip of the last segment can be helpful in distinguishing between the sexes.

Colours

Colours can be useful when identifying odonates. Males and females look different (i.e. they are sexually dimorphic). A good example is Blue Skimmers. The females are shades of orange or yellow while the males are blue. Males are often more colourful than females. However, colours can alter as the insect ages.

Habitats

Almost all odonates lay their eggs into or close to water. Most larvae develop in an aquatic environment, usually fresh water but sometimes brackish. Different species prefer still water and others flowing water. They feed on aquatic animals such as other insects, tadpoles and occasionally fish. Freshwater habitats are the best place to look for odonates. Odonates also prefer specific vegetation types. Some species inhabit rainforests and wet sclerophyll forest while others are near coastal and dune wetlands.

Behaviour

Other clues to identification lie in behaviours. There are differences amongst the species in the ways they fly, perch and hold their wings. Observing odonates reveals that some prefer vegetation to perch on while others prefer rocks. Some perch and sit while others appear to rarely land. We have observed that many have a recurring pattern of behaviour where they take off, circle and return to the same perch. Mating behaviour of odonates is complicated and unusual and beyond the scope of this short article. The Queensland Museum website on this subject makes for interesting reading.

Making your property Dragonfly and Damselfly friendly

To increase the variety of Odonata on your property it helps to provide water in the form of ponds and dams, flowing water or impermanent pools. Many Odonata larvae rely on suitable water temperature, good oxygen levels and unpolluted water to survive. Dragonflies and damselflies are important bioindicators of water quality. Shade helps keep the water cooler, but it is also important to allow sunny spots for them to bask. We have increased the vegetation around our waterways. The addition of sedges, reeds and lomandra improves water quality and creates habitat.

Newly emerged odonates also like to have somewhere to hide while their wings harden. Plant life also encourages other insects on which the odonates feed. You can add resting spots in the form of fallen branches or upright sticks and flat rocks. We have installed dragonfly 'perches' by

placing cut lengths of bamboo a couple of metres tall in a vertical position in various locations. Increasing vegetation also helps. We have also noticed some love to perch in long grass in the sun so providing a patch of native grasses could be beneficial.

Identifying and Recording Sightings

Dragonflies and damselflies are more active in the warmer months. The most productive months are October to May. We regularly survey our property and photograph any odonates. As we have become more aware of odonates, we look out for them just as we do migrating birds. Spotting clouds of flutterers around a particular fig tree is now an annual event.

We use iNaturalist to identify and record our sightings. There is a very dedicated team of experts on iNaturalist who help with identification. It's also a great place to store your sightings and generate statistics. We also use the Queensland Museum publication, *Dragonflies and Damselflies of South East Queensland*. On our four hectare block we have recorded 37 species of odonata. Fiery Skimmers are our most recorded species.

Photographing Odonates

A photograph is helpful in identifying dragonflies and damselflies. Our fit for purpose camera is a Canon SX70HS. It is a bridging camera that doesn't cost the earth and is ideal for most wildlife photography.

Start by building your awareness of the habitat and routine of odonates. Depending on the type, they occur not only around watercourses but also at the top of hills and just about anywhere in between. The good news is that odonates are late risers so 9am and a sunny day will find them active and flying.

Nice and slowly now, odonates are fast but they behave better if they are approached gradually. Once you have spotted your subject, stand still and observe their routine. They usually have a patrol area and a go-to landing spot.

Now that you've identified that spot, position yourself with the sun coming over your shoulder. As soon as you can, take a photo of your subject. Still steady as she goes, take a small step forward, making sure none of your gear or clothes are flapping in the breeze and then take another shot. If the dragonfly or damselfly is on the ground or perched down low, slowly get down on your knees and take some more shots. We've had them let us get within inches of them simply by moving slowly.

Some dragonflies, especially those patrolling watercourses, seem to refuse to land. We've had success by putting an upright stick at the water's edge in their patrol area and within minutes they have landed on it.

Dragonflies and damselflies are a romantic and alluring addition to any Land for Wildlife property. Who can resist trying to spot a dazzling Sapphire Rockmaster, Royal Tigertail, Water Prince or an Australian Emerald Dragonfly? These unique fliers are living fossils that have been on Earth for around 300 million years. They are definitely worth looking out for.

Article and photos by Patrick and Wendy Shanley
Land for Wildlife members
Moorina, Moreton Bay

References and Further Reading

Burwell C (2024) *Dragonflies and Damselflies of South-East Queensland.* A Queensland Museum Guide. shop.qm.qld.gov.au

Smith D & Neill G (2022) *Brisbane's Common Odonata (Dragonfly and Damselfly).* Queensland Naturalist's Club. qnc.org.au

iNaturalist - inaturalist.ala.org.au

Released in 2024, this pocket book is the go-to guide for identifying odonates in SEQ. It covers 83 species with a focus on the more commonly encountered and iconic ones, and those of conservation significance.

For a small book, it succinctly covers odonate habitats, behaviour, anatomy and identification tips. Each species profile contains photos of adult males, females and sometimes young adults.

Definitely value for money.

$11.95

Available from Queensland Museum Shop in person or shop.qm.qld.gov.au

Just some of the 37 species of odonates recorded on Patrick and Wendy's property (top down): Graphic Flutterer, Australian Tiger, Black-faced Percher, Common Bluetail and Yellow-striped Flutterer.

Letters to the Editor

Here is a photo of our current visitor who has been hanging around for about a week. It is at least one metre long. Should we be reporting this somewhere?

Donna and Trevor Greaves
Land for Wildlife members
Coominya, Somerset

Editor's Reply: Thanks for sharing, and lucky you to have the unusual Bell's form Lace Monitor (*Varanus varius*) on your property. We encourage Land for Wildlife members to put photos like this on iNaturalist (www.inaturalist.ala.org.au). It is free and easy to join and you can upload images or sound recordings of any lifeform anywhere on Earth. The AI in iNaturalist will suggest an identification, but it only becomes a verified record if a human also identifies it. Taking photos on your phone will automatically record the location (if location services are on), but you can always drag and drop the image onto a map on iNaturalist to specify the location. It is easy to obscure the location for privacy, which is recommended for this image as unfortunately Bell's form Lace Monitors can be targets of illegal poaching.

We are Land for Wildlife members located at Doonan. We love the magazine and work quietly away at improving our patch. During December our Tawny Frogmouth family visited. I was lucky enough to snap this lovely image. I thought you might like it for the magazine. Keep up the good work.

Katia Lyon
Land for Wildlife member
Doonan, Noosa

Vale Elizabeth Verreyt. The Sunshine Coast native plant community has lost a tireless advocate.

After a lifetime of teaching in and around Brisbane, Elizabeth retired to Flaxton in 1995. The property she purchased was a grassy paddock with a few camphor laurel trees and lots of weeds. She had a vision – she wanted to grow a forest.

From here on, she dedicated her life to revegetating her land. She set to work eradicating the weeds and planting many thousands of native trees.

Around that time, she also organised the Picnic Creek Land for Wildlife Group. Together with a few neighbours she held regular working bees to clean up and revegetate the Conservation Reserve along Picnic Creek which bordered their properties.

Her trees were her passion. Under her care the trees thrived and now, 30 years later, the property is a magnificent forest. She never stopped looking after it and enjoyed walking along the tracks until her deteriorating health made this too difficult. Elizabeth passed away last year after a short illness. Her legacy lives on through her trees.

Maria Rosenfelder
Land for Wildlife member
Palmwoods, Sunshine Coast

Dingo: The true story of Australia's most maligned native animal

By Roland Breckwoldt

Australia's dingo has long been shaped by myth rather than science, and in *Dingo*, Roland Breckwoldt untangles the historical and ecological consequences of that mismatch. For landholders interested in conservation, biodiversity and working with natural systems rather than against them, the book offers valuable insight into one of Australia's most misunderstood native animals.

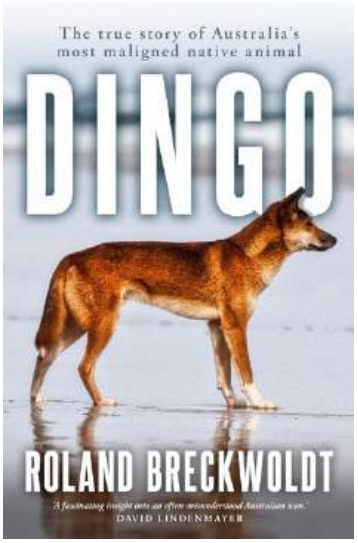
Breckwoldt traces how dingoes became vilified following European settlement, blamed for livestock losses and targeted through bounties, poisoning and extensive fencing. These responses entrenched the dingo's reputation as a pest while obscuring its role as Australia's native apex land predator. The book also addresses the persistent claim that dingoes are simply feral domestic dogs, presenting scientific evidence that supports their distinct identity and important ecological function.

The cultural significance of dingoes to First Nations peoples is given thoughtful attention. Breckwoldt acknowledges their long standing roles as companions, hunting partners and spiritually important animals. He highlights how colonial land use practices disrupted both ecological balance and Indigenous relationships with the dingo, which are important for those seeking to care for country in more informed and respectful ways.

A particular strength of *Dingo* is its inclusion of first hand accounts from landholders who have chosen to coexist with dingoes on their properties. These examples demonstrate tangible benefits, including reduced numbers of feral species such as pigs and goats and improved regulation of kangaroo populations. In some landscapes, the presence of dingoes has eased macropod grazing pressure and supported healthier vegetation and wildlife populations. This book offers compelling evidence that coexistence with dingoes can deliver both ecological, economic and practical outcomes.

Drawing on his own experience as a former ringer, Breckwoldt writes with an understanding of the realities faced by people living and working on the land. He is clear-eyed about challenges, but equally clear about the opportunities that emerge when dingoes are recognised as part of a functioning ecosystem rather than a problem to be removed.

Despite increasing scientific recognition of the dingo's ecological role, Breckwoldt warns that populations are now low or absent in many regions. As he notes, *Dingo* is as much a story about human attitudes and choices as it is about wildlife. Long overdue, the book encourages landholders to consider more science based and observant approaches to managing dingoes, and, where appropriate, allowing dingoes to reclaim their role in the landscape as natural regulators. This book contributes constructively to the conservation story of Australia and I would highly recommend it for Land for Wildlife members pursuing sustainable land stewardship.



Allen & Unwin Publishing
2025 | Paperback
352 pages | $35
Available online and in bookstores.

Review by Stephanie Keys
Land for Wildlife Officer
Sunshine Coast Council

Native Plants of Bribie Island and Sunshine Coast: A Field Guide for Wildflowering

By Allan Carr

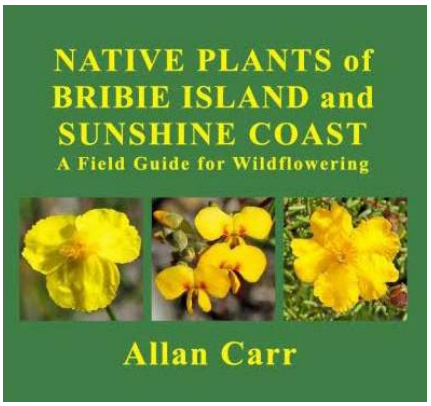
Since retiring as a teacher and moving to Bribie Island some 20 years ago Allan hasn't exactly let the grass or should I say native plants grow under his feet. A member of the Caboolture Branch of Native Plants Qld and the Wallum and Coastal Heathland Study Group, he has reprised his excellent 2018 publication with this expanded version.

Covering nearly 370 species each accompanied by detailed photography with the majority taken by the author. This is a very easy to use guide with plants grouped alphabetically by their flower colour. Main images are accompanied by inset close-up photographs of the flower and seeds. The stand out feature is the "what to look for" description describing obvious characteristics of the plant for easy identification.

Allan has demonstrated his deep knowledge and affinity with the plants of the region and I find it difficult to see a time when such an excellent book will not remain a key part of the resources of those interested in discovering more about our native flora.

This is a book not to be left gathering dust on the bookshelf but rather to be kept with you at the kitchen table or in the car getting sticky and dog eared from use as you go on your many walks to discover the native plants of Bribie Island and the Sunshine Coast.

Review by Chris Joyce, Land for Wildlife Officer, City of Moreton Bay



2025 | Paperback
200 pages | 18x18cm | $25
Available from some community nurseries in Moreton Bay and Sunshine Coast or via the author,
Allan Carr at carr.allan44@gmail.com

Capturing Cryptic Creatures

USING FAUNA CAMERAS ON PRIVATE PROPERTIES

A native Bush Rat (*Rattus fuscipes*) captured on a Reconnyx fauna camera. Note the tail is the same length as the body and the large ears.

Around two thirds of Australia's natural environment is privately owned, which means landholders play a critical role in conserving biodiversity. Most of our scientific understanding of wildlife comes from research done on public lands. This has created a huge gap in our knowledge amid this era of biodiversity loss.

Through the use of fauna cameras, citizen scientists are contributing to a better understanding of species distributions, populations change over time and responses to environmental pressures.

Have you ever walked through the bush and wondered, "Where are all the animals?". This experience is known as the fauna observer effect - an unintended disturbance where the presence of people causes animals to alter their behaviour. Wildlife may retreat, reduce feeding or show signs of stress, which can influence what is observed. Fauna cameras help to overcome this challenge by offering a more passive option to monitor wildlife activity without human presence. The images and videos they capture help fill knowledge gaps, confirm species presence or absence and inform conservation planning.

Thanks to more affordable camera technology and the rapid rise of AI powered image analysis, wildlife monitoring on private properties is now more accessible than ever. Whether you're hoping to spot gliders, bandicoots, macropods or other more elusive animals, a thoughtfully placed fauna camera can reveal fascinating insights into the species sharing your land.

With so many new models on the market, selecting the right camera can feel overwhelming. A good fauna camera should be weatherproof, easy to use and capable of capturing clear images at night, as many native species are nocturnal.

Key Fauna Camera Features

- **Fast trigger speed** (0.1–0.2 seconds) to capture quick moving animals.
- **High image resolution** (24–60+ megapixels) to support accurate species identification.
- **Reliable night vision**, ideally with no glow infrared LEDs to minimise disturbance.
- **Strong battery life** or solar capability for long deployments
- **High waterproof rating** to cope with Queensland's weather.

Solar powered or Wi Fi enabled cameras can add convenience, particularly for cameras placed in hard to access locations.

Tips for Getting the Best Images

- Install cameras low to the ground (knee height) for bandicoots and small mammals.
- Use waist to chest height for macropods and larger animals.
- Position cameras along animal tracks, fence gaps, creek lines or near habitat features such as fallen logs or permanent water.
- Where possible, face cameras south to reduce sun glare.
- If need be, angle the camera slightly downwards by putting a spacer like a stick between the top of camera and its attachment point. Some cameras now come with levers to set the angle.
- Avoid pointing cameras toward neighbouring properties to remain compliant with privacy laws.

Use Attractants (where appropriate)

Researchers and professional ecologists operating under valid government permits may use attractants, such as peanut butter, to encourage target wildlife species to approach camera traps. Similarly, Pest Management Officers may employ attractants including chicken carcasses or sardines when targeting feral predators such as foxes or cats. It is important to note that the use of bait may require a permit, particularly if images captured are intended for publication. All relevant regulatory, safety and ethical requirements must be met prior to deploying any attractants.

As an alternative to food-based attractants, minimal habitat disturbance may be used to increase animal interest within the camera's field of view. This can include lightly digging a small hole or gently scuffing leaf litter to create visual or scent cues that attract fauna, while avoiding environmental harm.

Users should be aware that employing either of these methods changes the approach from passive observation to active intervention, which may influence animal behaviour and should be carefully considered.

Check Regularly - but Discreetly

Frequent visits can influence animal behaviour. Longer deployments using larger SD cards or solar assisted power help reduce disturbance.

Minimise False Triggers

Clear grass and vegetation using secateurs from the detection zone. Swaying leaves can generate thousands of empty images. Preventing false triggers saves battery life, storage space and time.

Fallen logs can attract lots of wildlife looking for invertebrates to eat or safe places to shelter. They are great spots for cameras.

Fauna cameras can capture images that would be near impossible to see in person such as these Swamp Wallabies interacting.

Next to a waterhole can be a good place to set-up a fauna camera. Make sure there is minimal sunlight reflecting on the water otherwise the reflections can generate lots of false triggers.

This waterhole attracted a Dingo and an Australian Boobook owl.

Use AI Tools for Image Analysis

Sorting through thousands of images can be time consuming, but recent advances in machine learning mean landholders no longer have to do it all manually. Here are three AI tools available that can assist with detecting animals and identifying species.

- **Stickybeak** (Australia specific AI for fauna cameras) - Developed by the Tasmanian Land Conservancy, Stickybeak uses the open source MegaDetector to detect animals, people, and vehicles, then applies models tailored to Australian fauna to identify species. Users can confirm or refine predictions, improving accuracy over time.
- **AddaxAI** (Offline AI image analysis) - AddaxAI is an open source, offline tool that detects and identifies species in camera trap images and videos. Using MegaDetector alongside ecologist developed species models, it is well suited to landholders who prefer a private, local workflow.
- **WildObs** (National wildlife camera trap infrastructure) - The Wildlife Observatory of Australia (WildObs) is developing a national AI powered system to manage Australia's growing camera trap data. It aims to support automatic species detection, centralised data storage and streamlined sharing with platforms like the Atlas of Living Australia.

While artificial intelligence tools can assist in managing and analysing large volumes of data, their capacity for accurate species identification - particularly at a local or regional level - remains limited. This is due to the reliance on existing species models, many of which are still under development and may not comprehensively represent local biodiversity. As a result, traditional reference materials continue to be the most reliable sources of information for species identification.

Recommended references include:

- *Wildlife of Greater Brisbane.*
- *Strahan's Mammals of Australia* by Andrew M Baker.
- *A Field Companion to the Mammals of Australia* by Steve Van Dyck, Ian Gynther and Andrew Baker
- Australian Mammal Identification Facebook Group
- *Tracks, Scats and Other Traces: A Field Guide to Australian Mammals* by Barbara Triggs.

What Should You Do with Your Fauna Camera Images?

While it's wonderful to build a personal record of wildlife on your property, sharing this information ensures it benefits conservation into the future - especially if ownership of the land changes.

Platforms such as iNaturalist allow you to store wildlife records and also contribute data to the Global Biodiversity Information Facility, Atlas of Living Australia and CSIRO which supports scientific research, wildlife management and conservation planning nationally and globally.

With the right camera, thoughtful placement, and the support of AI analysis tools, landholders can play a meaningful role in wildlife monitoring. Fauna cameras not only support conservation efforts - they also offer a unique window into the hidden lives of native but also non-native (feral) animals on your property.

Article by Nadia Joyce
Land for Wildlife Officer
Sunshine Coast Council

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National Research Project

Over the past two years, many Land for Wildlife members have been involved in the *Sharing My Place with Greater Gliders* project. This is the third and final year of the project.

This nationwide research project supported by the National Environmental Science Program (NESP) examines how landholders perceive and interact with their properties over time. Greater Gliders and other large arboreal mammals have been the focus of the surveys undertaken by researchers walking alongside Land for Wildlife members.

This project has been delivered by James Cook University researchers, Michael Tervo and Maaike Hofman, in collaboration with the Land for Wildlife teams at City of Gold Coast, City of Logan, City of Moreton Bay and Scenic Rim Regional Council.

You can read more about this project on the NESP website: https://nesplandscapes.edu.au/projects/nesp-rlh/conserved-and-managed-lands/

Results from the three-year project will be made available in research papers and also in this LfWSEQ magazine.

Project outcomes so far:

Over 500 Land for Wildlife members involved

8 webinars on practical conservation and citizen science

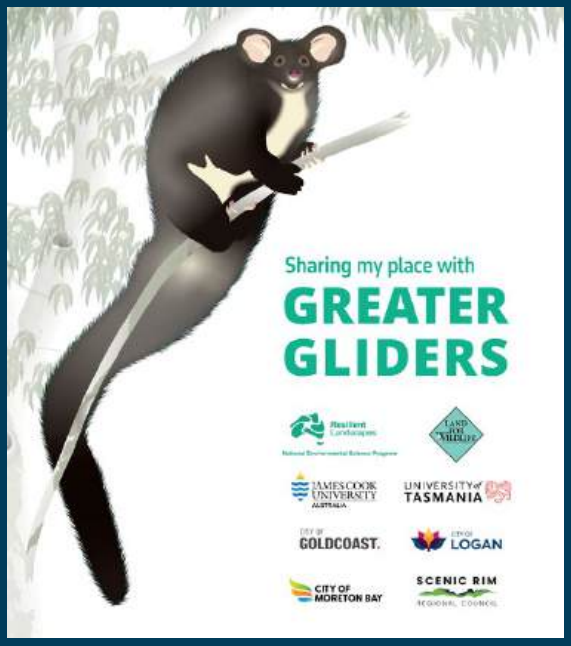
84 interviews with Land for Wildlife members

11 in-person workshops on spotlighting and iNaturalist

10 properties found Greater Gliders

Over 100 iNaturalist members

40 properties visited by Greater Glider detection dog



We are calling on all Land for Wildlife members to contribute to this third and final survey for this project. Participation is completely voluntary and all data will remain anonymous and only collective data will be shared.

Please use the QR code or this link: https://utas.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_bjCZvqVhBUFVGWW

Survey opens 1 May and closes 30 June 2026

Austin is a detection dog who has been trained to find Greater Gliders including their tiny scats shown in the blue lid. It would be nearly impossible for people to find these scats on the forest floor. Austin successfully found evidence of Greater Gliders living on ten Land for Wildlife properties as part of this NESP-supported project. Photos by Nicolas Rakotopare.