LAND FOR WILDLIFE

SOUTH EAST QUEENSLAND

NOVEMBER 2026 VOL. 20 NO. 3



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Your Officers

Brisbane City Council

Amanda Maggs	3178 6767
Andrew Wills	3407 0215
Cody Hochen	3178 1001
Fflur Collier	3178 2489
Susan Nolan	3403 6777
Tony Mlynarik	3178 4294

City of Gold Coast

Adrian Cain	0435 037 094
Lee Piper	0424 778 713
Melanie Mott	0466 866 032
Sascha Erhard	0422 454 550
Saul Hondow	0481 400 222
Todd Burrows	0439 226 250

Gympie Regional Council

Bree Galbraith	1300 307 800
Taj Gieskens	5481 0438

Ipswich City Council

Joshua Pethtel	3810 6666
Ko Oishi	3810 6666

Lockyer Valley Regional Council

Rylie Pan	5462 0354

City of Logan

Alexander Vanek	3412 4488
Gibson Kelly	3412 4482
Jennie Bacon	3412 4522
Jason Creamer	3412 5034
Kimberley Howard	3412 4906
Nick Swanson	3412 5355
Peter Copping	3412 5321
Sara Jensen	3412 4974

City of Moreton Bay

Adam Richardt	5433 2072
Chris Joyce	0477 988 942
Debbie McQuattie	0436 336 733
Nicole Byrne	3094 3632
Stefan Hattingh	0460 019 720
Wendy Heath	0409 268 838

Noosa Council

Paul Sprecher	5329 6500

Redland City Council

Maree Manby	3820 1102 / 0438 776 535

Scenic Rim Regional Council

Greg Tasney	0439 089 248

Somerset Regional Council

Darren McPherson	5424 4000

Sunshine Coast Council

Chad Oliver	0417 774 278
Michael Mills	0477 795 231
Michael Reif	0437 112 071
Nadia Joyce	0427 569 990
Nick Clancy	0407 754 193
Rhonda Bordonaro	0459 737 626
Stephanie Keys	0408 665 826

Toowoomba Regional Council

Chris MacColl	0484 297 313
Shania Watson	4688 6514
Sandy Robertson	0415 277 145



Land for Wildlife South East Queensland Team
February 2026

Land for wildlife SOUTH EAST QUEENSLAND SNAPSHOT

5,751 TOTAL PROPERTIES

4,623 REGISTERED PROPERTIES

1,128 PROPERTIES working towards RESTORATION

87,772 ha RETAINED HABITAT

10,572 ha Habitat Under RESTORATION

143,793 iNaturalist OBSERVATIONS

18,719 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 NOVEMBER 2026 ISSUE

Writing my first editorial feels a little surreal after years of reading Deborah's words in this space.

I feel honoured to have been selected as Regional Facilitator and know I am stepping into big shoes. I have known Deborah for over 20 years as a friend and colleague and greatly admire the outstanding legacy she leaves behind.

No one can replace Deborah, nor should we try. Instead, we can build on her strong foundations and keep supporting the people who make Land for Wildlife what it is: our landholders, officers, councils and many partners.

As a Land for Wildlife member myself, I know how highly the program is valued. I aim to keep listening to councils and landholders and building on what has been achieved.

What makes our program unique is its grassroots, council-led model, with 13 councils working together to support private land conservation. As we approach 30 years, that collaboration is well worth celebrating.

Special thanks to Brisbane City Council for its outstanding work as our previous host council, and to its officers for their time and care. Sincere thanks also to Logan City Council for taking on the host role, and to the officers who worked tirelessly to make this happen and continue to support me and our Business Support Officer. Thank you also to our Steering Committee, subcommittee Chairs and council representatives for guiding this transition.

The sense of legacy and stewardship runs through this edition. We hear reflections on the history and future of Land for Wildlife, explore the remarkable wildlife sharing our properties and waterways, and see what can be achieved when landholders, councils and communities work together. From fire and ecological recovery to Platypus, freshwater turtles and taking time to observe wildlife, these pages remind us why caring for our patches matters.

Farewell to two of our officers Catherine Madden and Dave Burrows. Catherine recently left Scenic Rim Regional Council after over 15 years with Land for Wildlife across two councils. Her energy, enthusiasm and practical approach have made a lasting contribution. Thank you, Catherine. Dave retired after an incredible 27 years in local government. His knowledge, quiet dedication and trusted landholder relationships have made an enormous contribution to Land for Wildlife and private land conservation in Noosa. Thank you, Dave.

A very warm welcome to Wenda Shurety, our new Business Support Officer. Wenda brings a diverse background in conservation, communications, business support and science, and will work closely with me on communications, systems and administration across the program.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to this edition, especially our landholders – your stories make this newsletter special. If you have a story but are unsure how to tell it, please contact your Land for Wildlife officer or me. We would love to help.

As we approach 30 years of private land conservation, I look forward to the journey ahead with you all. Until next time, happy reading, and thank you for caring for your patch.

Craig Welden, Land for Wildlife SEQ Regional Facilitator

We welcome all contributions.
Please send them to:
The Editor
info@seqlfw.com.au
0447 261 849



Climate & Weather REGIONAL OUTLOOK

Nov 2026 - Jan 2027

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

Rainfall. The rainfall outlook is mixed across the region, although the Bureau of Meteorology's forecast map shows much of SEQ is likely to receive above-average rainfall. View the BoM seasonal rainfall outlook map.

Climate Influences

- A strong El Niño and a positive Indian Ocean Dipole are underway.
- Sea surface temperatures are forecast to warm across the region.

Seasonal Bushfire Outlook

The Summer 2026 Seasonal Bushfire Outlook had not been released at the time of publication. Check the AFAC Seasonal Bushfire Outlook for updates.

Sources

Bureau of Meteorology, Long-range forecast overview and Long-range forecast: November 2026 to January 2027 (video), accessed 30 October 2026.

Weeds to Watch

Nov 2026 - Jan 2027

Mickey Mouse Plant (*Ochna serrata*) is named for its ripe fruit, which resembles the cartoon character's face and ears. Introduced to SEQ as a garden ornamental, it can dominate the understorey, outcompeting native forbs, grasses and shrubs.

It grows in a range of soils and spreads mainly by seed, eaten by birds such as currawongs. Flowering from early spring, with fruit appearing from mid-spring.

Control can be difficult. Stem scraping is the most effective method – watch this short video (via QR code below): How to control ochna on your property. After rain, seedlings can be hand-pulled from moist soil with minimal disturbance.





Images by Craig Welden.







Deborah stands next to an old LfW sign that hangs on the front gate of her property. She aims to 'reactivate' it and become a LfW member.

Leadership, Legacy & STEWARDSHIP

After 22 years as Land for Wildlife South East Queensland (LfWSEQ) Regional Coordinator, I stepped down from the role at the end of June 2026. It was a massive decision entwined with many emotions. It's been a privilege to lead LfWSEQ and to advocate for its values. I am grateful for this opportunity to say some parting words and to thank the hundreds of LfWSEQ members, supporters and colleagues who have walked beside me.

Twenty-two years is a long time. I stayed for that long because the program aligns with my values and the values of my colleagues and I suspect your values too, as a LfW member or supporter.

LfWSEQ is an incredible program. It is solutions-focussed. We don't focus on the problems. No newsletter edition that I have been the Editor of complains about the state of the environment. I figure our readers already know this and can readily source details elsewhere. What LfWSEQ offers is solutions. We aim to uplift, inspire and offer tangible support for landholders and occasions for them to connect with other like-minded land managers.

LfWSEQ celebrates the champions of nature. There are thousands of them across SEQ doing remarkable conservation and cultural land management.

The program elevates successes, skills and innovations of landholders. Some of the efforts of LfWSEQ members are truly incredible.



The first (October 2004) and last (May 2026) edition of the LfWSEQ magazine with Deborah as Editor.

The program embraces nature from the cute mammals to the unsung heroes like fungi, mistletoe and insects. We value the wellbeing and peace that people get from a connection with nature. It is a privilege to have nature at our doorsteps.

This program is based on collaboration and partnerships. Thirteen Local Governments working together can achieve more than one council on its own.

This program has enabled me to work with autonomy, trust and flexibility. I have kept the program moving forward, welcoming opportunities for growth, diversification of services and new ways of doing business.

I have loved celebrating LfWSEQ champions. I have been the Editor for 87 editions of this quarterly newsletter and have met hundreds of landholders who are leaders in conservation and their communities. It's been my honour to share their stories and inspire others.

Over the 22 years, the program has faced challenges of funding, covid, bushfires, floods, and the highlights of membership milestones and new staff. When I started there were 2049 properties with 10 staff. Now there are over 5750 properties and 44 staff. It's been rewarding to see the program grow to support more and more landholders.

One of my recent goals was to increase research to showcase the outcomes of LfWSEQ and to give better visibility of the program within the broader private land conservation industry. Compared with other state programs, LfWSEQ is under-researched. The program has contributed to the recovery of threatened plants and animals such as the Black Plum and Richmond Birdwing butterfly.

It has turned degraded lands into healthy forests. It has supported landholders to do conservation land management more efficiently and has enabled landowners to establish more meaningful connections to their properties. None of that is recognised in research. It is why I was a strong advocate of the National Environment Science Program (NESP) funded project that has been running for the past three years and is in its final reporting stage. My hope is that the peer-reviewed papers it generates will start to correct this imbalance. I want to thank all the LfWSEQ members who completed surveys for this project and contributed to this research.





LfWSEQ Steering Committee in 2014 and 2026 with many of the same faces – a sign of a meaningful workplace.

There have been countless highlights over the 22 years with some notable ones being:

- The Open Property Scheme for the 10th Anniversary in 2008.
- Brisbane LfW Art Show for the 20th Anniversary in 2018.
- Bus trip to Minjerribah to learn from Traditional Owners.
- Various officer training workshops including back of house tours of the Queensland Museum.

Most memorable have been visits to LfW properties across SEQ from Gympie in the north to Toowoomba in the west and south to the border. I have visited incredible places from East Egypt (Lockyer Valley), Carneys Creek (Scenic Rim), Austinville (Gold Coast), Sheldon (Redlands), Bethania (Logan), Upper Brookfield (Brisbane), Clear Mountain (Moreton Bay), Gowrie Junction (Toowoomba) and Conondale (Sunshine Coast) to name a few.

I've been fortunate to meet landholders who are managing the few remaining Brigalow forests of Ipswich, healthy Blue Gum flats with Koalas in Somerset and subtropical rainforests with lyrebirds in Springbrook. I have met landholders who have personally planted thousands of trees to re-create ecosystems in Noosa, along the Blackall Range and on former pineapple farms near the Glasshouse Mountains. I have seen landholders control hectares of weeds – Lantana, Cat's Claw Creeper, Madeira Vine, Tree Pear, Glycine, Ochna, Asparagus, Rhodes Grass – you name the weed, LfWSEQ members have controlled it.

The work of LfWSEQ members will continue. Hopefully the value attached to it only increases. Fundamentally, conservation land management improves the liveability of an area. It improves the wellbeing of people who live and visit there. It provides homes for wildlife. It supports healthy populations of pollinators. It makes landscapes more resilient and aesthetically valuable. It improves water quality and the seagrass beds in Moreton Bay. It lowers the terrible impacts of droughts, wildfires and floods. It builds proud and healthy communities. It underpins sustainable rural industries including the water we drink and the food we eat. More and more, it values the cultural landscapes and heritage created by First Nations People who were the original land for wildlife proponents.

With the recent development of a LfWSEQ Communications Plan, I see ways for the program to diversify communications with members through digital avenues. There are great opportunities here to reach more people and explain core ecological and restoration principles in bite-size content. Plus, celebrate our champions. It is an exciting time ahead, especially with the 30th anniversary around the corner in 2028.



Deb and Craig have shared more than 20 years of friendship and working together in conservation.

I feel very happy in the knowledge that Craig Welden has stepped into the role as LfWSEQ Regional Facilitator. I have worked with Craig for 20 years. He knows the LfWSEQ program inside out as both an officer and a member. He brings strategic thinking, enthusiasm and creativity to the role and I know the program is in good hands.

I will continue to work in the private land conservation sector and have taken a part-time role with BioDiversity Legacy, working with landholders to explore long-term protection options for conservation properties.

I have also applied to join LfW for my own property. Two years ago, I purchased a property in the Helidon Hills at the foothills of the Toowoomba Range. It already had a Nature Refuge covenant on title and an old LfW sign hung on the gate. I have decided to join LfW and look forward to being on the other side of the gate so to speak. Like many of you, I now spend weekends doing conservation land management.

I will miss a lot of things about the role, especially the people. I've had good people around me for 22 years. That is hard to replace. I hope everyone involved in LfWSEQ feels as proud as I do of the program's impact. This program changes lives, communities and landscapes for the better. Thank you to all LfWSEQ officers and members for your support and encouragement over the years.

I look forward to seeing the LfWSEQ program continue to grow, and where possible, contributing to its collective success.

Deborah Metters
Former LfWSEQ Regional Coordinator
0437 910 687 | deb@enature.com.au



The LfWSEQ program has been running for nearly 30 years and has been constantly changing to reflect new science, technology and ways of doing business. The LfWSEQ technical notes were co-authored by Deborah to present principles of ecological restoration and biodiversity conservation. They have been the cornerstone of practical land management advice in SEQ, benefiting not only Land for Wildlife properties but also the broader community of landholders seeking sound, practical solutions for managing their land.

Platypus in Brisbane

STORIES FROM THE CATCHMENTS, SCIENCE FROM THE WATER



Platypus depend on healthy waterways, but their conservation extends beyond the water's edge. Protecting and restoring riparian habitat on private land is an important part of conserving platypus across South East Queensland. Photo by Edith Wiskar.

On a quiet stretch of creek in Brisbane's west, a tagged platypus surfaced briefly before slipping back beneath the water. It was a moment that thrilled researchers and later delivered a remarkable story. That same animal was later identified more than 20 kilometres away, having travelled through the waterways of the Maiwar (Brisbane River), from Moggill Creek to Bullockhead Creek, crossing the Brisbane River along the way. This rare confirmation of long-distance movement demonstrated that Brisbane's waterways remain connected, and that platypus can still move through an urban landscape when suitable habitat corridors exist.

This journey tells a much bigger story about Brisbane's platypus, one of resilience, relationship-building, and renewal; and of the growing collective effort to understand, protect and restore the waterways they depend on.

Platypus are elusive and difficult to monitor. For many years, their presence in Brisbane's waterways was based on local sightings and knowledge. That changed with Brisbane City Council's adoption of environmental DNA (eDNA) monitoring, a scientific technique that detects genetic traces platypus leave behind in water samples.

Since monitoring commenced in 2019, repeated annual sampling has provided a clearer picture of where platypus are present, where populations may be declining, and where conservation action should be prioritised. Platypus presence has been confirmed in multiple Brisbane creeks including Moggill, Kholo, Pullen Pullen, Shelley, Cabbage Tree (Lake Manchester), Jindalee, Wolston, Bullockhead and Sandy creeks, as well as the South Pine River and Albany Creek in the north.

Combined with traditional surveys, trapping studies and local community knowledge, this information is helping shape a more strategic, citywide approach to platypus conservation, moving beyond individual sites to focus on whole catchments, and the waterways and communities that connect them.

Protecting platypus in a growing city requires collaboration. Brisbane's approach is built on partnerships between First Nations peoples, residents, community organisations, council programs such as the Land for Wildlife and researchers.

Brisbane City Council works closely with Wildlife Queensland, Platypus Conservation Initiative, Australian Conservation Foundation, local catchment groups, Land for Wildlife partners and universities. Platypus move across Council boundaries so regional partners including Council of Mayors (Resilient Rivers Initiative), Seqwater and neighbouring local councils are also important to ensure coordinated action across the wider catchment.

Protecting platypus requires a coordinated approach across waterway health, habitat restoration, stormwater management, compliance and community engagement programs. Together, these efforts help address both localised threats and broader pressures on waterway health to support healthy and resilient platypus populations.

Some of the most enduring platypus conservation work in Brisbane has been driven by community commitment.

In Brisbane's western suburbs, the Moggill Creek Catchment Group has monitored Platypus for more than two decades in catchments containing many of Brisbane's Land for Wildlife properties. Their work has confirmed Moggill Creek as a stronghold for Brisbane's Platypus population and provided extensive data that supports research and management decisions.

In the Kholo and the Shelley Creek catchments, it was a Land for Wildlife partner who first alerted Council about the presence of platypus, helping trigger broader monitoring and on-ground action. Since then, landholders and volunteers from the Pullen Pullen and Kholo Creek Catchment Groups have played a pivotal role in annual platypus surveys, community walk and talk events, and creek restoration works designed to improve habitat condition.

Further downstream, the Wolston Creek Catchment is emerging as a priority area for community action and investment. Recent trapping studies in Wolston and Bullockhead creeks have confirmed breeding and connectivity within this highly urbanised

landscape, reinforcing the importance of protecting and restoring creek habitat. This area is now a key focus for Brisbane City Council's platypus conservation efforts, with habitat restoration underway along Bullockhead Creek through funding from the Australian Government Urban Rivers and Catchment program and Council's Natural Waterway Rehabilitation Program.

Wolston and Centenary Catchments Group is steadily working to restore creek corridors, conduct biodiversity surveys, and host educational events that build community connection, care and responsibility for platypus conservation.

The Yuggera Ugarapul Peoples are engaged in restoration work in the catchment, including a cultural heritage assessment in 2025 at a site along Bullockhead Creek. Combining archaeological practice with generational cultural knowledge, these opportunities heal more than the land. It is a chance to restore cultural memory, revive important species, and reconnect Country with community.

Land for Wildlife is actively seeking to engage with residents and commercial and industry landholders in the Wolston Creek Catchment, recognising the critical role that private land plays in protecting riparian corridors and supporting long-term platypus survival.

Brisbane's platypus story is one of cautious optimism, but also urgency. Research shows platypus remain vulnerable to habitat loss, altered flows, declining water quality, fragmented waterways, and fishing gear such as enclosed Opera House-style yabby traps, which can pose a drowning risk to platypus and other aquatic wildlife. Continued effort is needed to protect the habitats that allow these animals to move, feed and breed.

Now is the time to build on the momentum already underway. Community members can help by reporting platypus sightings, supporting wildlife-friendly fishing practices, caring for waterways by reducing litter and managing stormwater runoff, and getting involved in local catchment groups or the Land for Wildlife South East Queensland program to help restore habitat on public and private land.

Brisbane's platypus have shown us what is possible when waterways remain connected. Across South East Queensland, there are many ways to get involved in helping platypus, from supporting local monitoring and habitat restoration projects to volunteering with your local catchment group. By working together, we can help ensure these remarkable animals continue to thrive in waterways across the region. To learn more, contact your Land for Wildlife officer, local catchment or PlatypusWatch group.

Article by Natalie Costanzo and Amanda Maggs, Land for Wildlife Officers, Brisbane City Council and Amanda Brigden, Senior Program Officer, Brisbane City Council



Dr Tamielle Brunt collects water samples, which are sent away for further analysis to detect the presence or absence of platypus environmental DNA (eDNA). Platypus are particularly well suited to eDNA monitoring because they continually shed genetic material into the water through skin cells, urine and faeces, allowing highly sensitive laboratory techniques to detect even small traces of their DNA. Dr Tamielle Brunt has been involved in platypus research and eDNA monitoring for more than eight years, researching and working alongside councils, Land for Wildlife Landholders and community to build our understanding of platypus distribution across South East Queensland. She is also passionate about platypus education and raising community awareness of the actions we can all take to help protect this remarkable species and the waterways it depends on.



Protecting Platypus requires collective action across the landscape. Catchment groups, Land for Wildlife members, wildlife conservation groups, natural resource management bodies and local communities all have a role in caring for the waterways and habitats on which Platypus depend.

A Burn You Say

- JUST ADD FIRE, WATER AND GOOD RELATIONSHIPS



Sunshine Coast Council Land for Wildlife Officer, Michael Reif sharing his knowledge of fire ecology in the Dry Sclerophyll forests in the Sunshine Coast Hinterland to Hinterland Bush Links members in preparation for a prescribed burn.

I grew up in a national park. Wildfire in the heathland was a constant threat. Everyone in our small town belonged to the fire brigade. We learnt from childhood how to prepare the house and what clothes to put on in the event of an encroaching fire, not to run away, but to stay and defend!

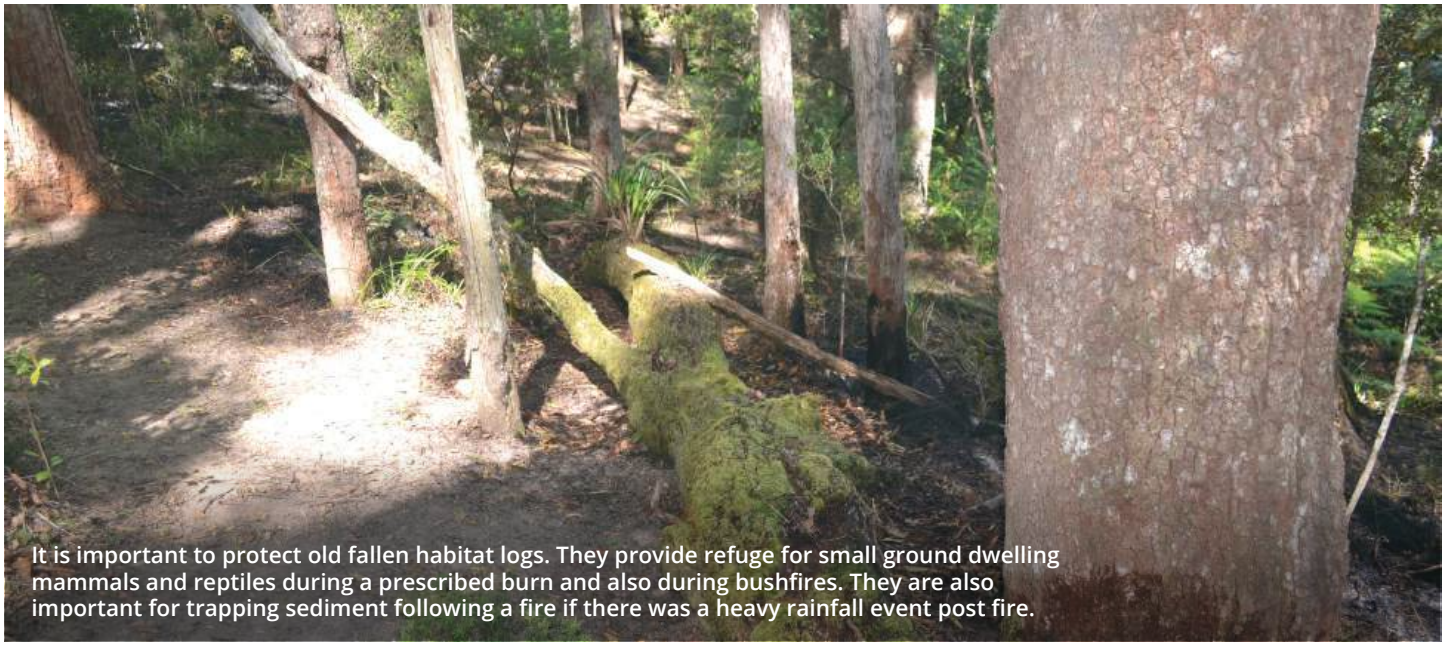
It was always a revelation to walk in the bush after a fire and see the amazing regeneration of plant life. We combined that pleasure with carrying buckets of water to put out any still-smouldering logs we came across.

Now, we own a Nature Refuge with Land for Wildlife South East Queensland and Voluntary Conservation Agreement status in the Sunshine Coast Hinterland. The 67 hectare property is in excellent condition, has a healthy population of koalas, birdwing butterflies, powerful owls, greater gliders and several other rare or endangered species and several threatened ecosystems. The landscape moves from dry to wet sclerophyll, and then to rainforest in very deep gullies. Slowly, since the last wildfire in this area (some 75 years ago) the rainforest is creeping up the hillsides.

We have been planning a cool burn along a dry sclerophyll section adjoining the local road for some years. In anticipation of that event, we asked Sunshine Coast Council Land for Wildlife Officer, Michael Reif, who was previously the Council's Fire Management Officer, to give a talk on the purpose of ecological burns - that is, for biodiversity and habitat diversity. We invited our local bush regeneration group members – Hinterland Bush Links, to come and hear Michael speak.

He explained that we need to keep dry sclerophyll forest intact to provide habitat for a wide variety of plants and animals – that can't live in dense rainforest. Fire helps many plants to grow, resprout and set seed, whilst rainforest needs protecting. Here in the Hinterland we also need to be aware of the need to protect habitat for koalas and other mammals that live in the eucalypt forest. Indeed, a regular cool burn of the eucalypt forest also provides protection for the rainforest from out-of-control bushfire.

Obtaining a permit to burn is not a simple matter. We worked through several challenges over several years, including weather conditions, funding limitations and scheduling requirements associated with local Rural Fire Brigade operations. The fire permit we finally obtained was to be used in spring 2025. Weather conditions didn't allow for a fire at that time and so the burn didn't happen until mid-April 2026.



It is important to protect old fallen habitat logs. They provide refuge for small ground dwelling mammals and reptiles during a prescribed burn and also during bushfires. They are also important for trapping sediment following a fire if there was a heavy rainfall event post fire.



Rural Fire Service Queensland's fleet of vehicles was driven to the burn site by the highly capable firefighters from our local brigades. They executed the burn to the prescriptions we had discussed and were incredibly efficient.

As part of the permit to burn, we were asked by the local Rural Fire Service Queensland Voluntary Fire Warden to clear a two metre fire break around the burn area. This may have been a bigger break than necessary, but it certainly gave plenty of space for the fire fighters to move safely around the site. We also explained to the Fire Warden that we wanted logs and big trees protected from burning, so we cleared around them too.

We have learnt that low intensity cool burns were the main burning regime that First Nations people used over thousands of years in this area.

We have much to learn from their careful stewardship of this Country - the Jinibara Country.

One of our most important learnings is fire is not to be feared, but a tool to be properly used.

We were over the moon when just two days after Michael Reif's talk, four fire tankers and three large fire utes turned up and the local Rural Fire Brigade commenced the burn, with long hoses stretching to all parts of the burn area. We were so pleased to have our long-planned-for burn take place. Maleny and Conondale Rural Fire Brigades conducted an extremely well planned and carefully executed cool burn on just one hectare of land at the top of the hill. They were well organised, efficient and knew exactly what the job entailed. The whole operation went well. Very cool, slow burn. Finished by lunchtime!

The Rural Fire Brigade monitored for the next 24 hours, as did we! The best thing was the discovery of a Stephens' Banded Snake, *Hoplocephalus stephensii*, on the fire ground at midnight, looking for any little creatures it could eat, that hadn't run away from the fire. Only one Lace Monitor, *Varanus varius*, was seen wandering slowly from the site as the burn started. Many birds had been there the day before collecting seeds and bugs and I think they knew what was coming.

It was all so exciting we could hardly sleep that night. We are very relieved now that it is done, not so much for the threat of fire, but because the bureaucratic process of arranging a controlled burn was so arduous. Building positive relationships with your local Rural Fire Brigade is often one of the most effective ways to support successful collaboration. Taking time to understand brigade priorities and sharing ecological knowledge in a practical, respectful way can help build trust and goodwill. Some people also find that becoming involved with their local brigade provides valuable insights and connections.

If challenges remain, consider reaching out to your local Rural Fire Service Area Office for guidance and support. We hope the experience contributed to stronger collaboration between local conservation landholders and the brigade. The Fire Warden and Brigade First Officers were excellent.

Several of our neighbours were happy to see the burn being done. The neighbourhood fear of fire and smoke is often a constraint on prescribed burns. Maybe such fears can be allayed by good experiences and positive outcomes from well organised burns?

We are most grateful to Michael Mills, our Sunshine Coast Council Land for Wildlife Officer, and to Michael Reif for his engaging talk on fire ecology and his insights gained from years of experience. Plus, we are grateful to our friends in local bush care groups who play such an enormous part in protecting and restoring this beautiful landscape we live in. And we congratulate the members of the Rural Fire Service Queensland for their careful and skilful work.

We are concerned by the enormous build-up of dense undergrowth and leaf litter after 5 years of very wet weather. We urge other Land for Wildlife property owners to consider prescribed burns to protect and enhance their property's ecological values, and to avoid the possibility of severe bushfires as conditions dry.

Article by Fiona McGill & Richard Proudfoot
Rainforest Ridge Nature Refuge, Curramore, Sunshine Coast
All images by Richard Proudfoot

Editor's note: This article shares one property owner's experience of carrying out a prescribed burn. Appropriate planning, consultation and approvals are essential before undertaking a burn. For current requirements, speak with your local Fire Warden and Rural Fire Brigade and visit the Queensland Fire Department's fire permit information.



A Rural Fire Service Queensland firefighter from a local brigade applying fire slowly from a prepared control line. You can see the raked pathway that the fire was lit from. Burning at the right time of the year when there is good soil moisture provides for a cooler burn. Notice the small flame heights in this image.



Albert's Lyrebird (*Menura alberti*), affectionately named "the dinosaur bird" by the author's daughter.

After Bushfires

FOREST RECOVERY IN THE SCENIC RIM

We had only owned the place for about five months, still just discovering what we had, when the 2019 Mount Barney National Park bushfire came through and burnt approximately 95% of our property. About a month later, the fire came back. It had been on walkabout down in northern New South Wales. The second visit burnt the rainforest, already drought affected from the first fire. Our sheds were saved, thanks to the valiant efforts of the local Rural Fire Service Queensland (RFSQ). Other than that, it was devastating.



Following the bushfire, many trees came down. We repurposed the fallen timber and created a playground for our kids.

There were a few positives from the bushfire, if you look hard for them. Our girls got a playground built from fallen trees, and we made 'bushfire damper' in a smouldering tree. After the fire, you could read the history of the place in a way you couldn't before. Where our house sits was once a logging camp and truck-loading point. Local oral history tells us a large tree from near our house ended up at Enrights Sawmill in Beaudesert, where it remains on display out the front.

The ridgeline at the back of our property formed part of the main jinker track running towards the breaking-down mill. After the fire, old trails, ruts and logging-road excavations emerged from the ash, making the property a little easier to explore.

In 2024, another fire came through from a reignition of a controlled burn Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) had started to protect the rainforests in the park. By then, we had learnt the value of well-maintained access trails. We had added new ones and kept them four to five metres wide. Those trails allowed the local RFSQ Firefighters and QPWS Rangers to establish control lines that stopped the fire at the rainforest margin. The aftermath brought its own complications. Soil instability has brought down large old trees along the rainforest edge, which in turn has brought down trees in the rainforest itself, leaving gaps in the canopy and opportunities for weeds.



Image taken seven days following the fire.

The property layers as you climb, with grassy slopes merging into open eucalypt forest, then She-oak stands. Dunn's white gum forest (*Eucalyptus dunnii*), wet sclerophyll and rainforest occupy the mid to upper reaches and riparian lines. Weeds are a challenge across the whole property, and Lantana (*Lantana camara*) is the headline problem, especially in the Dunn's white gum forest and at the rainforest margins. Being 54 steep hectares that we can only visit roughly twice a month, we've had to be pragmatic. The area around the house has become the natural priority. It sits on a small, gently sloped elevated plain, right in the heart of the Dunn's white gum forest and adjacent to the rainforest. One unexpected gift of the 2019 fire was that it knocked back the existing Lantana thickets, allowing us to get in early on regrowth before it got away from us again. This has allowed the natural vegetation to re-establish in the wonderful way nature can if you let it.



Dunn's white gum forest (*Eucalyptus dunnii*) seen here in the background. These trees can reach heights of up to 50 metres.

What we hadn't fully appreciated before the 2019 fire was the stinging tree situation. The property has both Giant Stinging Tree (*Dendrocnide excelsa*) and Shiny-leaved Stinging Tree (*D. photinophylla*), and we'd been warned about them by the previous owners. Before the fires, most were large and had grown tall under the rainforest canopy, so they weren't really at arm or leg height. Post-fire, all bets were off. Giant Stinging Trees are pioneer species and come back fast. I discovered first-hand why one of their names is "ankle biter". They are a food source for Pademelons and are naturally occurring here, so removing them has never been an option. Now most are tall enough again that they've stopped being so hazardous.

We have camera trap images from before the 2019 fires, including an Albert's Lyrebird (*Menura alberti*) in the rainforest. Our daughter, five years old at the time, said it looked like a dinosaur. She wasn't wrong. We recorded one in 2023 and another in 2024, but it wasn't until June 2025 that we started seeing them with any frequency in the rainforest. That felt like a recovery milestone.

During our initial Land for Wildlife meeting, our officer Keith McCosh pointed out koala (*Phascolarctos cinereus*) scratchings on some trees and mentioned the habitat overlay. We knew Koalas were there somewhere; we just hadn't seen one. In November 2024, one finally appeared on camera. We literally shouted with joy. We've since captured video of one scent-marking a tree, seen them on two cameras with reasonable regularity, and have heard the mating call. At a quiet property in the dark, the first time you hear it, it takes a moment to process.

Other calls we have identified are similarly peculiar: Yellow-bellied Glider (*Petaurus australis*), Greater Sooty Owl (*Tyto tenebricosa*) and the Australian Masked Owl (*Tyto novaehollandiae*). Before the 2019 fires, we would regularly see and hear groups of Glossy Black-Cockatoos (*Calyptorhynchus lathami*) feeding on She-oak (*Allocasuarina* spp.) cones on the slopes behind our house. That stand was badly scorched, and we didn't see the Glossy Black-Cockatoos for a long time. We first noticed discarded cone remains, or orts, in early 2025, the first sign they were returning. We didn't start seeing the birds again until around September 2025. Glossy Black-Cockatoos are selective feeders, and She-oaks take years after fire to recover.

There are parts of the property we haven't reached yet. We're not ecologists, but we're curious, amazed by nature and believe in contributing what we can. Our observations go into iNaturalist and FrogID, and every visit adds something to what we know about this small patch of earth. This country has harboured a remarkable ecology long before we arrived. We hope that what we do here, however modest, leaves the land and everything that lives on it in a better state than we found it, and that it continues to thrive long after we're gone.

Article by Kris Logan & Inar Swift
Land for Wildlife Members, Burnett Creek, Scenic Rim
Images (except for Pademelon) by Kris Logan and Inar Swift



We have observed Pademelons eating Stinging Tree leaves without any apparent ill effects. Image by Todd Burrows.



This *Eucalyptus dunnii* measures 8 metres in circumference, giving it a DBH (diameter at breast height) of 2.55 metres.

Read more about Stinging Trees here: https://www.lfwseq.org.au/stinging-trees-plants-that-make-you-go-hmmm/



A nature journal can reveal the changing rhythms of a property, one observation at a time. Land for Wildlife SEQ member Keryn records what she sees each week through drawings and notes. In early March, fungi stole the show, with an abundance of fruiting bodies emerging across her property.

A Creative Approach TO OBSERVING NATURE

I rarely go anywhere without my sketchbook and pen these days. Paying close attention to nature has become a cherished habit, and I feel impelled to capture fleeting thoughts and what I see in pen or watercolour.

As a young child I remember many outings to national parks and picnics with extended family. As I grew and was able to reach tractor pedals propped forward with piles of cushions, I spent time with my grandad out in the paddocks over many seasons checking soil moisture, the readiness of sunflower seeds for harvest, and digging with bare hands into sticky black soil for potatoes. I was my grandma's shadow as we filled our aprons and shirts with sugar snap peas and dirt-covered carrots, and balanced on rickety wooden ladders to pick quince and pears. The shapes, colours, smells and textures of nature never ceased to grab my attention. Capturing nature with drawings or random scribbles in diaries has been an on-and-off love for many years.

Despite working in an office for most of my career, my interest in nature has only deepened. I joined Land for Wildlife South East Queensland more than six years ago and there began an exploration down endless rabbit holes which then inspired a re-learning about sketching and capturing my observations in a journal. In 2025, inspired by botanical artist, illustrator and nature journaller Lara Call Gastinger, I started a perpetual journal divided into 52 weeks. Each year, during each week, I draw something I observe. I decided I wanted to capture what was in my own backyard; plants, animals, insects, fungi, slime mould it's all in there.

The whole process has resulted in me slowing down and using art as a tool for observation, for paying attention to the big and small, for building familiarity with the plants and animals we share our land with. Olivia, the Eastern Grey Kangaroo (*Macropus giganteus*), is a regular visitor and has had four joeys here. We have watched them emerge from the pouch and take their first shaky hops, do zoomies around the yard and then tumble back into her pouch with their spindly legs sticking out.

My drawings from early 2025 show an explosion of fungi following wet conditions, while the same period in 2026 was much drier, with fewer fungi but more woody species. During the same time, I drew the Grass Lilies (*Murdannia graminea*). Very typically they are a soft mauve, with little fluffy haired centres but with surprise I observed **a rare white-flowered variation**.

In mid-2025 I began a love affair with the Small Nodding Greenhood (*Pterostylis hispidula*) – a small insignificant orchid that "nods".



Drawing encourages us to slow down, look closely and record the things that catch our attention. Keryn's sketches of Nodding Greenhood Orchids were accompanied by this simple observation: "*17th August 2025. Nodding Greenhood Orchid. Up along the back fence. So many of them and I find them fascinating.*"

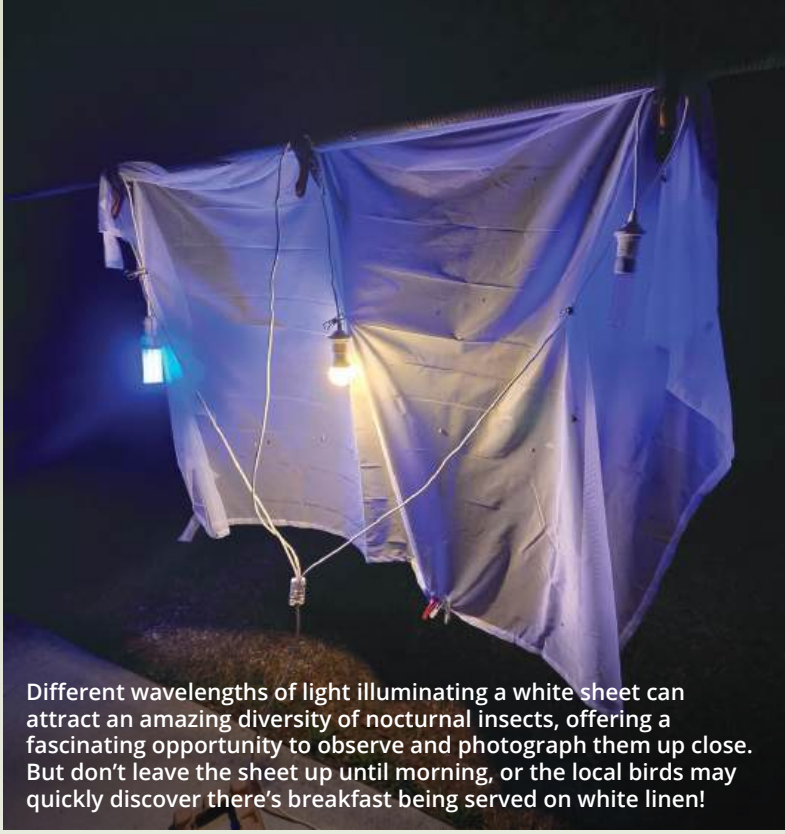
If you didn't get down on the ground, right into the grass and damp leaves you would miss the delicate transparency of the white and green hood known as the labellum ready to "lock" and close the entrance to trap the pollinator inside.

By mid-2026 I had drawn the orchid at least 50 times, taken countless photos and learned that it emits a wind-borne scent that mimics female fungus-gnat (family *Mycetophilidae*) pheromones to attract the male. The male gnat lands on the labellum which is triggered by the touch sensitive structures to close and trap the gnat. Inside the orchid, the gnat wanders looking for a way out. Eventually it finds a narrow opening and is released with fresh pollinia (a single mass of pollen) attached to its thorax to fly off to another Small Nodding Greenhood to repeat the process. The little patch of Small Nodding Greenhood is in a very shady patch and this year they have spread, so I guess the gnat is doing a good job.

In early 2026 I attended an insect illustration workshop at Lake Eacham, Far North Queensland. It was here that I learnt new skills not only in illustrating but also in ways to attract insects for observation. The workshop taught me how to attract insects to one spot for observation by using a light sheet illuminated with different wavelengths of light.

Consequently, I started hanging up a light sheet most weeks. I've observed moths, beetles, katydids, flies and all sorts of other insects being attracted to the lights. I learned how to draw moths, their patterns, colours and textures are easy to overlook. I have become familiar with the regular visitors. Without fail each time I put up the light sheet something new arrives for me to draw. Now I'm on a quest to draw all the different moths that visit.

Being part of Land for Wildlife South East Queensland has inspired me to increase the diversity of plants and animals on my patch. Using art to draw the plants and animals in my backyard means that I spend a lot of time observing the land intimately, noting changes of the season and what's happening earlier or later, what isn't showing up, like the bees missing for the last few months or the current mystery of what is happening at night that we're trying to solve with the help of a wildlife monitoring camera. This close collaboration between art and science has made me a more observant person, someone who cares more deeply about all of nature, from the nearly microscopic slime mould on a stick to the 1.8 metre tall male Eastern Grey Kangaroo (*Macropus giganteus*) hopping past the kitchen window in the early morning.



Different wavelengths of light illuminating a white sheet can attract an amazing diversity of nocturnal insects, offering a fascinating opportunity to observe and photograph them up close. But don't leave the sheet up until morning, or the local birds may quickly discover there's breakfast being served on white linen!

I hope my perpetual journal will become an archive of the incredible diversity on the place that I and thousands of organisms share. I encourage everyone to pick up a pen and a piece of paper and draw what they see. We can all make marks, whether as words, a loose sketch or a complete illustration, and use our curiosity and patience to build a deeper connection with the landscape.

Article, illustrations and images by Keryn Klein
Land for Wildlife member and Logan City Council colleague, Logan

A couple of favourite articles and websites of Keryn's

Lara Call Gastinger – Perpetual Journal https://www.laracallgastinger.com
Pterostylis nutans: Nodding Greenhood | Atlas of Living Australia
https://bie.ala.org.au/species/https://id.biodiversity.org.au/taxon/apni/51412238
John Muir Laws – Nature Journalling - https://johnmuirlaws.com
Bethan Burton – https://www.journalingwithnature.com/

BOOK REVIEW

Plant Local to Attract Local

By Ann Moran and Mike Fox

Whether you are a bush regenerator or urban biodiversity gardener, Plant Local to Attract Local, is a useful reference for anyone seeking to support local wildlife in our region.

Written by Ann Moran, field botanist, and Mike Fox, experienced bush regenerator and project director for Pollinator Link, this publication is a comprehensive database of known interactions between plants of south-east Queensland and the wildlife that depends on them for shelter, food and nesting sites.

The information is categorised by vegetation type with comprehensive fauna and habitat information provided for each listed plant species including plant size, flower colour and flowering times. The spiral-bound, A4 size book sits flat. With a pastoral district map and handy quick reference table at the back, this book will help you select the best local native plants for your situation.

There are no plant photos because companion plant profiles can be found online by following the QR codes in the book to the Pollinator Link website where each profile contains colour photos and detailed notes about plant ID features, etymology, distribution and status. https://pollinatorlink.org/plant-profiles/

This will make a practical resource for people interested in supporting local wildlife. For more information or to purchase a copy, please contact Mike Fox at pollinatorlink@gmail.com



Review by Fflur Collier
Land for Wildlife Officer
Brisbane City Council

A Sub-adult Macquarie River Turtle (*Emydura macquarii*) climbs onto the bank to bask. Photo by Greg Tasney (@gregtasney), via iNaturalist.



This Broad-shelled turtle (*Chelodina expansa*) nest (identified by its occurrence in May) has been predated on by Red Foxes (*Vulpes vulpes*), photographed by A.J Dominelli (@cinclosoma), iNaturalist

Freshwater Turtles

SMALL BEGINNINGS, BIG CHALLENGES

Take a moment to ponder the following question. When was the last time you saw a young freshwater turtle in the wild? I would be unsurprised if you struggled to find an example.

Given that we see adult turtles regularly, we don't consider that there might be a crisis at play. As pressures have increased on our turtles over recent decades, many of these individuals have started entering their retirement years without being able to secure a new generation to follow them. The freshwater turtles of SEQ are considered an 'ageing demographic', as most individuals will live up to 40 years, but there are currently few juveniles and low recruitment rates to replace them.

While nest predation is a natural part of their ecosystem balance, nest threats have historically only been Monitor Lizards (*Varanus* spp.), the Echidna (*Tachyglossus* spp.), and Dingo (*Canis familiaris*). Red Foxes (*Vulpes vulpes*), and Feral Pigs (*Sus scrofa*), are also skilled at digging up turtle nests to eat turtle eggs, and since their arrival to Australia have driven turtle nest predation upwards of 90%, meaning nearly all nesting sites are attacked by predators before the hatchlings emerge. This statistic doesn't include the added pressure of nest trampling by livestock drinking at the water's edge. In addition, most of our rivers and creeks have been altered since European colonisation resulting in higher levels of turbidity, reduced native aquatic vegetation, and removal of waterway 'snags'. This loss of structure in waterways has increased turtle hatchling predation by fish, larger birds such as Torresian Crows (*Corvus orru*), and Eastern Water Dragon (*Intellagama lesueurii*), to name a few. All in all, it is not a great time to be a turtle hatchling.

Freshwater turtles emerge from their eggs at roughly the size of a 20-cent coin, depending on the species, and weigh only a few grams. As fresh hatchlings develop their leg muscles and learn the limits of their lungs, they are restricted to the water's edge for the first weeks of life. This is where they are most exposed to predation.



Snake-necked Turtle (*Chelodina sp*.) hatchlings emerging from the nest chamber, note the small exit hole with no noticeable eggshells. Photograph by Steve (@wakool), iNaturalist.



Macquarie River Turtle (*Emydura macquarii*) hatchling. The term 'penny turtle' is misleading. It refers only to the small size of hatchlings; these turtles grow considerably larger as they mature. Photo by Gibson Kelly

Over the first year they grow rapidly, eventually making them too large for most mouths to swallow. After this they take on a more sustainable rate of growth where they grow slowly, hardening their shell and dulling their markings to blend in more with rocks and logs, rather than the algae and leaf litter they grew up in. It takes a minimum of ten years for our freshwater turtles to reach adulthood. Moreover, it takes over ten years before the luckiest baby turtles have a chance to produce their own offspring and continue a new generation.

Few long-term datasets exist for long-lived, slow-growing animals like our freshwater turtles meaning the true scale of the problem is unknown. One study in central NSW estimates that the Broad-shelled Turtle (*Chelodina expansa*) and Eastern Long-necked Turtle (*Chelodina longicollis*), both of which are found in SEQ, have faced a 69–91% decline between 1976 and 2011. That's staggering.

By consuming carrion and other organic material, freshwater turtles contribute to nutrient cycling and waterway ecosystem function. Affectionately nicknamed our waterway vacuum cleaners, freshwater turtles perform a crucial ecosystem service that is essential to maintaining the overall health of natural environments.

Most turtle nesting occurs in the late-spring and early-summer rains when the wet weather softens the soil and allows them to lay their eggs in the sandy substrate. Females will attempt to lay their eggs above the flood level, as the porous eggs can drown if the nest floods. The Broad-shelled Turtle will lay later in autumn between March and April, with an exceptionally long incubation period lasting almost a year. An otherwise cryptic species, it is often seen crossing roads and has been recorded travelling up to one kilometre over land in their attempt to find the perfect nesting site for their clutch. The nesting season is a unique opportunity to document and observe the wonderful turtles that we're fortunate to have. So, the next time you see one of these creatures, be sure to photograph it and log your sighting to iNaturalist.

Article by Gibson Kelly
Land for Wildlife Officer
Logan City Council

Practical action – see next page!

References & Further Reading

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Chessman BC. (2022) Introduced red foxes (Vulpes vulpes) driving Australian freshwater turtles to extinction? A critical evaluation of the evidence. Pacific Conservation Biology 28, 462–471. https://doi.org/10.1071/PC21058



A large Broad-shelled Turtle (*Chelodina expansa*) female laying her clutch of eggs in the nest chamber she has excavated with her back legs. Photograph by @skycsxandr, iNaturalist.

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OUR FRESHWATER TURTLES *Need a Helping Hand*

Building on the challenges outlined on the previous page, here are some actions you can take to help our freshwater turtles. You can indirectly protect the nests of turtles by having a fox management plan in place and installing wildlife-friendly fencing around known turtle habitat to prevent livestock from trampling nests and degrading the water's edge.

Managing and removing large invasive fish such as carp will also greatly improve both the habitat and survival rate of juvenile turtles in water bodies. Providing 'nursery' habitat with dead branches, submerged logs, roots, and aquatic vegetation offers vulnerable turtles a place of refuge where large predators can't reach them. These nursery spaces also attract other small fish for the same reasons and serve as food that young turtles can eat. In fact, submerging a log or tree into your turtle habitat is one of the best things you can do as it provides a basking point away from the shore and a shelter where they can anchor themselves underneath when sleeping.

Directly protecting nests with open mesh and stakes has proven highly effective in other states, helping protect eggs from foxes and other nest predators. **Do not install nest-protection structures or otherwise handle or interfere with turtle nests without advice and the required Queensland Government authority (*Nature Conservation Act 1992*).**

Maintaining good water quality helps provide suitable, reliable habitat, encouraging them to remain residents rather than crossing land in search of other waterbodies. This involves preventing chemical runoff, reducing sediment entering the water, and establishing native aquatic vegetation that absorbs excess nutrients while providing valuable habitat. Keeping areas around waterbodies free of litter, such as cigarette butts, fishing line, nets and other rubbish, is another simple action that helps protect waterways and wildlife.

The simplest action you can take is reporting any and all turtle observations you make onto iNaturalist. Tracking where our turtles are, when they're choosing to be active through the year or during wet weather conditions, and the movement of turtles on roads will help to inform decisions surrounding their conservation. Every observation helps build the long-term datasets we need, especially as we inevitably enter dry years in the future and see reduced activity.

Article by Gibson Kelly
Land for Wildlife Officer, Logan City Council



Eastern long-necked turtle (*Chelodina longicollis*) leaving the safety of the water. Photograph by Derek (@birdman_australia), iNaturalist.



Eastern Saw-shelled Turtle (*Myuchelys latisternum*) basking. Photograph by Greg Tasney (gregtasney), iNaturalist.