



MOONBI 125

MOONBI is the name given by the Butchalla Aborigines to the central part of their homeland, Fraser Island or "Kgari"

MOONBI is the newsletter of Fraser Island Defenders Organization Limited

FIDO, "*The Watchdog of Fraser Island*", aims to ensure the wisest use of Fraser Island's natural resources

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Backgrounders: This issue carries details of the first FIDO Safari for more than 20 years, following the route of the log-rafters up Tin Can Bay, Great Sandy Strait and the Mary River to Maryborough. A backgrounder profiles Skipper Armitage a pioneer timber worker with a 50-year association with Fraser Island. The Cyanobacteria Backgrounder explains the significance of these previously little noticed organisms on Fraser Island.

MOONBI 125 covers a range of divergent topics. While there has been progress in some areas, one issue, the defacement of Lake McKenzie (Boorangoora) remains a festering sore. The unnatural additions to this once most beautiful and iconic lakes remain in place after more than 18 months. FIDO's attempts to seek a conciliatory resolution meant that we missed the opportunity to pursue a judicial review. FIDO has since sought (a) to educate the QPWS on the significance and values of lake lunettes, and (b) to understand how such a stupid mistake could have been made in the first place and then persisted with. We have trolled through volumes of documents discovered under Right to Information and the findings of both are features on pp 3-4

Marine Matters: FIDO continues to advocate better protection for the natural marine resources of the Great Sandy Region. FIDO supported a very well researched proposal by Lindsay Dines to buy out all commercial licences to net fish from the beaches of Fraser Island and Cooloola. Page 2 features some of our concerns. Like our efforts to ensure an adequate no-take zone when the zoning for the Great Sandy Marine Park was gazetted, the move to create a marine reserve hit a wall of opposition with vested interests and others. Given the lack of protection for Great Sandy fish-stocks, it should come as no surprise that Fisheries Minister's response to FIDO suggests that nothing is likely to change because there is no proof that the fishery is not sustainable. Only when it is proven to be declining (probably when it is too late) will any action be contemplated. See p2

A Lack of Commitment: Unfortunately while most stakeholders support the consultative processes achieved through the Community Advisory Committee, there is a demonstrable lack of commitment that can be attested to by the attendance records. While membership of the CAC may look good on CVs it carries obligations. MOONBI 124 carried a detailed backgrounder on the impact of management of Fraser Island since its World Heritage listing, identifying the Federal Government's disinterest in Fraser Island as a contributing factor. It is interesting to observe the attendance records of the Commonwealth at advisory committee meetings. While sometimes there has been an unsatisfactory teleconference link between Canberra and Hervey Bay, for the February meeting, everyone in Canberra was too busy even to listen to

the proceedings. While stakeholders are very interested in consulting at such meetings, it is not only the Feds that are lacking commitment to the process.

Election Issues: As Queenslanders prepare for a state election on 24 March, MOONBI reviews some potential implications for Fraser Island that may result. See p8.

The Right to a Beach: The staggering statistics showing almost 18,000 sea birds and waders roosting on the section of Fraser Island's southern beach between North Spit and Hook Point on 10 January increase the validity of demands that this part of the beach be closed to vehicular traffic because there is an alternative. There is strong opposition to the alternative by 4WD drivers who want to avoid rough surfaces on Fraser Island! FIDO is arguing on moral grounds. See p8

Volunteers are still wanted for FIDO's bush regeneration at Eurong 13-19 May. FIDO provides comfy accom and island tours. Volunteers contribute 20 hours work & \$200.

Biennial Fraser Island Conference: FIDO has already begun planning for its biennial Fraser Island conference tentatively scheduled for July 2013 to be held in Brisbane. The theme will be "*Great Sandy - a Natural Laboratory*". FIDO is inviting scientists to nominate abstracts of papers they would like to present by the end of 2012



Change on Fraser Island: In August 2011 FIDO made a stem to stern aerial inspection of Fraser Island to assess changes. Vegetation is rapidly colonizing Binngih Sandblow immediately south of Waddy Point (top of photo). 30 years ago there was no vegetation between the beach and the sandblow.

In This Issue

Fraser Coast Marine Issues	2
What Future for Lake McKenzie (Boorangoora)	3
Making the Great Boorangoora Mistake	4
Member for Fraser Island; Where there is Smoke	5
Whose Rights: Fraser Beach Birds; Bush Regeneration program..	6
News in Brief: Hoax; Spiders; Myrtle Rust; Pigs & Cats; + more	7
New Coastal Plan; State Election Issues	8
Flier for Wake of Rafters Safari	9
Backgrounders: No 54 — Cyanobacteria	
No 55 — Skipper Armitage	

Fraser Coast Marine Issues

While historically FIDO's focus has been on land-use issues within the Great Sandy Region, we have been supportive of the efforts by others and have over the last decade stepped up our efforts to get greater recognition and protection for the Region's marine natural resources. Those efforts have assumed a greater urgency as the marine natural resources become ever-more depleted and complacent governments do little to address the problem as evidenced by the decision to protect less than 4% of Great Sandy Marine Park.

Ending Fraser's beach net fishing

FIDO has been liaising with Cooloola based recreational fishing advocate, Lindsay Dines for more than a year over his proposal to establish a Recreational Fishing Haven for the waters around Fraser Island and Cooloola. FIDO received a copy of his detailed submission which pointed out the many benefits including environmental benefits that could result in eliminating net fishing in Fraser Island and Cooloola waters and better regulation of the recreational fishing effort in October. We were particularly impressed by the detail of the social, economic and environmental benefits that could ensue. It would make the fisheries of the Great Sandy Region that have become significantly depleted as a result of over-fishing in more recent years much more sustainable.

After due deliberation at the November meeting, this organization unanimously decided to support Lindsay Dines' logical and well argued case for the elimination of net fishing. While for forty years, FIDO's focus has mainly been on terrestrial conservation and land-management issues in the Great Sandy Region, we have a deep concern also for the marine environment. Thus we urge all who can influence decisions of government to support the elimination of net fishing along the coastlines of Fraser Island and Cooloola.

Creation of recreational fishing havens and the banning of commercial fishing would allow public access and recreational fishing but not permit the use of commercial nets and apparatus within its boundaries and greatly assist the conservation of declining species. The Dines' proposal covers waters between the Noosa River and the northern tip of Fraser Island, Hervey Bay waters and seaward to 500m from the low tide mark. The proposal calls on the State Government to buy out all commercial fishing licences.

Details: <http://www.sunfish.com.au/pdf/DinesRFH2011LR.pdf>

No Fraser Coast Marine Reserve

It appears that the self-interests of commercial fishers, particularly at Tin Can Bay, where people are employed on trawlers, have prevailed in stopping the proposed 13,000sq km area marine reserve off Fraser Island. Although this reserve would not impact on any inshore fishing within 5.5 kilometres (3 miles) from the shore between Double Island Point and Indian Head, the proposal was opposed by amateur shore-based fishers. The Commonwealth proposal to include this area as part of a network of marine reserves was killed by Federal Environment Minister, Tony Burke on 11 November when he did not include the proposed Fraser Island Reserve in the network of new reserves covering about 1.47 million square kilometres of temperate and subtropical ocean from the southern boundary of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park to southern New South Wales, and Lord Howe and Norfolk Islands. FIDO is disappointed as all of the indicators point to a continuing depletion of marine natural resources. The Federal L&NP coalition threatens to scuttle the proposed Marine Reserves off Fraser Island and elsewhere in Australian waters.

New Impacts on the Mary River

The Mary River estuary is an integrated part of the Great Sandy Strait ecosystem. It is now being threatened by overflow run-off from a proposed **new Colton coal-mine** with its inadequate containment dams in the catchment of the Susan River. Impacts on the lower Mary River's marine environment will be seen and pollution will flow quickly into the Great Sandy Strait Ramsar area. FIDO doesn't want to be waiting for the fish, dolphins, dugongs and turtles to begin dying before any critical environmental assessment is carried out. FIDO will inspect the lower Mary River during our Rafters Safari.

Marine Industrial Park: Following the unfolding environmental disaster in Gladstone that has followed the severe disturbance of the Harbour, FIDO is watching closely proposed marine developments in the Great Sandy Region. This is why we are taking a close interest in a proposal to create a 65-hectare, 80-berth Port Maryborough Marine Industrial Park. The proposed facility on the banks of the Mary River downstream of Maryborough is estimated to cost \$40 million. The proposal has been on the drawing board for a decade but now the Queensland Government has pledged special help to get it up. It will provide for the manufacture and repair of boats, light ships and marine machinery, capitalizing on Maryborough's engineering expertise and establishing a marine precinct. Local Government Minister, Paul Lucas said that up to 100 construction and operational jobs for the Fraser Coast region could be created by the project. It is understood that the proponent that had first planned to develop this project went into administration late last year.



Feeding dolphins at Monkey Mia

Commercial Sacred Cows

In December DERM released an Information booklet on its "*Marine mammal legislative review*". This was a valid exercise to review if existing legislation was in the public interest and protected some threatened marine species. The release of the review though triggered a furious response by a number of people with commercial interests opposing any changes. In the case of whale watching, because two options canvassed could allow new operators, existing operators went into a frantic defence of the status quo (i.e. only holders of existing permits could undertake commercial whale watching). The feeding of the Tin Can Bay dolphins has been defended by veteran commercial fisher Joe McLeod who has produced a comprehensive document outlining the tradition of humans feeding dolphins from Aboriginal times to the present as he details the habituation of dolphins in Tin Can Bay.

What Future for Lake McKenzie (Boorangoora)?

FIDO fought a 20-year campaign to have Fraser Island's World Heritage values recognized in 1992. Since then FIDO has continued to campaign vigorously to protect those World Heritage values. So when FIDO sees work that is intentionally interfering with "*significant ongoing geological processes*", that is stopping the natural movement of sand from the beach to the lunette, and when we see "*superlative natural phenomena*" being degraded, then we are not going to relax until these values are restored.

The importance of the lake lunette

Lake lunettes are foredunes created on the leeward side of some Fraser Island lakes where the prevailing wind sweeps the sand off the beach to become trapped in the vegetation. Because there is more wind velocity in the centre of the beach, this dune becomes higher and wider at this point than it is on the edges of the beach. Also as a result of the shape of the lake these dunes tend to curve around the edge of the lake like a crescent moon. Hence the name lunettes.

The lunettes are a result of aeolian (wind blown) processes. The lunettes are major geomorphic features of lakes in sandy environments. On Fraser Island they are very powerful demonstrations of the geomorphic processes that are critical to demonstrating Fraser Island's World Heritage values.

FIDO contends that Lake McKenzie (Boorangoora's) lunette is no more threatened by human pedestrian use of the beach than the lunettes of Lake Birrabreen or Lake Boomanjin where the blowouts are much larger and more pronounced. Boomanjin's lunette blowouts, featured on the covers of two Fraser Island books, have negligible human use of the beach in front of these blowouts. Despite the evidence, DERM sees these bare areas on Lake McKenzie (Boorangoora's) lunette as justification for carrying out a monstrous modification.

Lunettes serve to trap any sand disturbed by beach users and ensure that it stays within the system. Therefore, no beach modification works were ever required.

Lunettes themselves are only one aspect of the dynamics of lakes' internal geomorphic characteristics that are recognized as part of Fraser Island's World Heritage values. Further developments can be found within the lunettes. Some lunettes have developing blowouts or parabolic systems. These are most obvious at Lake Boomanjin and Lake Birrabreen but they also occur on Lake McKenzie (Boorangoora) although not as immediately apparent. These blowouts are natural processes just as is the formation of the lunette itself.

The "Wow! Factor: The test on the aesthetic impacts of DERM's modification of the main Lake McKenzie (Boorangoora) beach is shown in the editor's photographic selections. DERM's own "*Naturally Queensland the QPWS Master Plan to 2020*" chose to use an old photograph of Boorangoora's beach as it once was, rather than one since its scenic amenity was so drastically diminished. This year's array of Australian calendars have a number with the theme "Australian beaches". At least two feature Boorangoora's beach. Both were taken before 2010.

While the beach now still has some attraction, so far all publishers have shunned using a photograph of Boorangoora's beach taken since DERM modified it. The plantation, disfiguring fence and other modifications are now detracting from the lake's tourist appeal. It no longer has that "Wow" factor that caused people to gasp at the image when they first saw the bare white sand and the clear water.

The Ambush Factor

What is so remarkable is that almost everyone, (even those not demanding the restoration of the lake) was taken by surprise at the ambush. The much lauded and much quoted (by DERM) "*Fraser Island Sustainable Visitor Capacity Study*" noted under Lake McKenzie "*Visitor Impacts*" said, "*Considering the high level of use Lake McKenzie's beaches are in fairly good condition suggesting the annual and peak daily use could increase.*" The Working Group that made that recommendation saw no need for any modification of the beach and there was no suggestion put to the Working Group that there would be any modification carried out on the beach. Thus DERM's modifications of the beach in 2010 came as a surprise and a shock to those volunteer members of the SVC working group.

On the Fence: In the presentation to the Advisory Committees in October 2009, the records show that the proposal was for a "*New post and wire pedestrian fence to run along the edge of existing vegetation to existing steps*". In fact the only suggestion of any work on the beach proposed to the advisory committees had the stated aim "*to reduce the visual appearance that this is a 'built landscape'*". Following the Joint Advisory Committees' first sighting of the fence in March 2010, when the issue of the fencing was first raised, the DERM minutes recorded:

Members wished to know why the fencing opposite stuck out past the vegetation line and if this area of white sand will be revegetated. It was noted that it would have been better to place the fencing along the contour. Also the water level has been observed past the fence line, and it was noted that this inundation may affect the success of revegetation. In its written response DERM claimed:

- * *The fence, which is a safety fence required during construction, must be of sufficient distance from the actual worksite to ensure visitor safety.*
- * *The final location of a vegetation protection fence will be determined on completion of construction and revegetation works.*

Two years after DERM's fence location was first criticised, and claimed to be only temporary for the construction period, it remains in its original location.



Boorangoora's Beach as seen on 10 February 1990

Making the Great Boorangoora Mistake

The controversy over the status of Lake McKenzie (Boorangoora) continues to be a festering sore that has become more acute as the high water levels of 2011 have become even higher in 2012. FIDO has pursued a Right to Information Request that has helped us understand how a great mistake was made that now detracts from the World Heritage values of the most iconic site on Fraser Island. What is disturbing is the reluctance of DERM to admit and correct this mistake.

An Unnatural Process

Following the “consultation” with the Fraser Island Advisory Committees, the Chair of the Scientific Advisory Committee, Dr. Sandra Brizga, a consultant geomorphologist E-mailed DERM in December 2009 on a number of potential environmental impacts that might result from the proposed redevelopment works of Lake McKenzie (Boorangoora). On the issue of “*FENCING ALONG LAKE SHORELINE*” she noted: *“The question of fencing along the lake shoreline is a vexed one. On the one hand, it is necessary to restrict access by visitors. However, apart from visual intrusiveness, there are risks that the fencing may affect natural process (e.g. accumulation of debris in fencing wires, alteration of natural erosion/deposition processes). The risks would be higher with more closely spaced wires, as this would make the fence at trapping windblown debris, hence increasing its obstructive impact.”*

DERM replied in January 2010 stating that they would “only install sufficient wires to restrain their movement. As a general principle we are endeavouring to use the minimum amount of infrastructure to minimise the impacts.” DERM though failed to note that Dr Brizga was concerned about the effect on “natural process (e.g. accumulation of debris in fencing wires, alteration of natural erosion/deposition processes)” Obviously Dr Brizga wasn’t aware of proposals to place matting and a plantation behind the fence that would do exactly what she was seeking that the fence should avoid.



Dr Brizga also queried the alignment of the fence: *“The plans show the fencing alignment as being curved, but not running parallel to the contours. Is there any reason why a contour level hasn’t been followed in areas where site-specific conditions do not dictate otherwise? Would using an approach based on following the contour where possible give a less visually obtrusive outcome?”*

To this DERM’s response was, *“The contours have been followed in some locations but not in others. We are endeavouring to reduce the current gun barrel straightness of the existing fencing and also to encourage visitors to disperse across the entire length of the beach. We are also attempting to return the vegetation to the base of the existing bank on the steeper more erodable slopes.”* Alas this response that told Dr Brizga of the plans to plant up behind the fence seems to have escaped her attention. However it referred only to the “steeper more erodable slopes” and not to the beach proper where it would have been assumed that a responsible organization such as DERM wouldn’t have even contemplated establishing a plantation let alone use matting especially in the light of Dr Brizga’s earlier comments of how even fencing could interfere with natural processes..

The Revegetation Argument

One of the more interesting aspects of DERM’s failure to accept responsibility is how it has interpreted or misinterpreted wording. That particularly applies to the word “*revegetate*”. “*Revegetation*” is mostly seen as good and meritorious word. It is now an emotional word. It is liberally inserted into DERM conversations and documentation. This is certainly evident in the justification for the work that was proposed in the redevelopment of Lake McKenzie (Boorangoora). A key question though is whether planting plants where nothing grew before is “*revegetation*”? Even if there may have been some vegetation there before (possibly reeds) does planting a small forest of trees of species that certainly were not growing on the beach previously constitute “*revegetation*”?

In its 3 monthly EPBC Report, DERM advised, *“Signs have been purchased and protection fencing has been erected where possible. More protection fencing will be put in place as construction nears completion. Biodegradable matting will also be put in place to help establish new plants.”* It illustrated its actions with the following illustration:



When it was pointed out that there were never trees previously growing on the parts of Boorangoora’s beach in living memory where the plantation had been established DERMS’s argument then changed to protection of the surface area from disturbance.

What Protection is needed?

The QPWS now claims the fence and plantation is needed to protect the area and is a necessary action to manage a growing number of tourists who visit Lake McKenzie. *“It’s just to cater for a very valuable natural resource on Fraser Island that was being, in short, loved to death.”*

It is FIDO’s contention that although the surface of the beach may be stirred up by pedestrian traffic, this is having no known harmful impact except to the micro-flora and micro-fauna of the beach and is possibly having less impact than the disturbance of 4WDs on Fraser Island’s Ocean Beach. There will still be the same volume of pedestrian traffic with or without the fence and therefore just as much disturbance of the surface sand although the area disturbed may be less.

Reducing the area of the sand surface being disturbed does not reduce the aggregate amount of disturbance and FIDO’s question is “How does it matter?”

The truth is sometimes hard to filter from various second and third hand reports. Thus it was interesting to recently meet with the Federal Parliamentary representative for Fraser Island, Warren Truss, Deputy Coalition Leader to discuss the why Fraser Island was a Cinderella of Australian World Heritage sites

Where there is smoke

On 1 October about 50 of the 500 guests at Kingfisher Resort had to be relocated to alternative rooms as a precautionary measure while a wildfire burning 800 metres away along Cornwalls Break generated dense smoke making some rooms most uncomfortable. It was school holiday time and a fire that only a few days earlier was thought to be extinguished flared causing some threats to the resort until there was a wind change.

The wildfire occurred in very dry conditions and was described as the largest on the island in years. While the QPWS was blamed for the fire, the Community Advisory Committee was advised only days before the flare-up of the problems of a fire that was not lit by them. It was possibly the result of a discarded cigarette. There was a controlled burn-off in the national park. Although at the time of the CAC meeting this wildfire had been thought to have been brought under control, the ferocious dry heat-wave conditions reignited the fire and started driving it close to the resort choking it with smoke. Fortunately efforts of firefighters and a change of wind saved the day. Many firefighters were involved in bringing the fire under control.

What were the environmental impacts? FIDO was alarmed by many of the descriptions of the intensity of the fire. We were particularly concerned because the area to the north-west of Lake McKenzie (Boorangoora) has long been identified as the area at greatest risk from a wildfire due to fire having been excluded for more than half a century. We were pleasantly surprised when we inspected the area in November that the fire had not been as damaging as had been described. Seven weeks after the burn the area was then in early stages of recovery but the signs of recovery were better than anticipated. We have taken a number of photographs from specific reference points and we will continue to monitor the regrowth and recovery using these reference points for comparison.

Fire is part of the Australian ecosystem and has been so for many millennia. The Australian sclerophyll forests evolved as a result of fire and are able to cope and recover from periodic burning. Fire was used by Aboriginals for at least 40,000 years before colonization and even in many parts until within the last 100 years. While not all plant communities are able to cope with fire, (particularly rainforest) most ecologists believe that the sclerophyll ecosystems require periodic burning to maintain natural and healthy well-balanced plant communities. Unfortunately there are better times than others for burning the forest and rarely do wildfires such as the recent Kingfisher fire occur at optimum times.



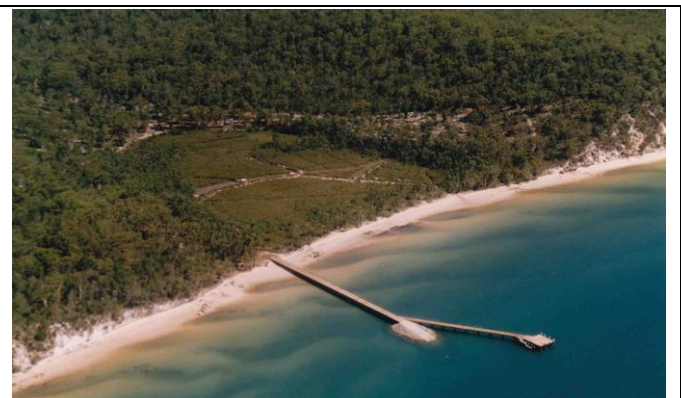
Warren Truss, MP

Soon after he entered the Federal Parliament in 1990 Warren Truss was interviewed for a Parliamentary magazine and this caricature was featured with the story illustrating his links with Fraser Island at the time when timber-workers felt threatened by the Fitzgerald inquiry into the island's World Heritage values. Ultimately only 60 workers were displaced as a result of the Fraser Island World Heritage nomination and all of these were given generous redundancies and retrained if they sought government help. Truss was formerly a farmer from Kumbia, near Kingaroy, and a State President of the Rural Youth Organization of Queensland. He is currently Federal Leader of the National Party and Deputy Leader of the Federal Opposition. He admits to being a committed MOONBI reader. We wondered whether he reads MOONBI [enthusiastically, devotedly, critically, compulsively ...] **Editor's Note:** *Please suggest a word that you think might best fit in the square bracket.*

New inquest into Azaria's 'dingo' death

In December the Northern Territory coroner announced a new inquest into the death of baby Azaria Chamberlain, 31 years after she was apparently taken by a dingo at Ayers Rock in a case that caused a worldwide sensation. The Northern Territory coroner, Elizabeth Morris, is reported as citing dingo attacks on children on Fraser Island as grounds for reopening the inquiry.

In the meantime QPWS research into Fraser Island dingoes is attracting increasing global attention as it helps to better understand dingo populations and dingo behaviour. On 30 January, the first of the dingo tracking collars dropped off as they were programmed to do after providing valuable data.



Site of Kingfisher Resort 10 February 1990 before construction of any buildings— From FIDO's photo archives

A Moral Question Over Whose Rights

Since 1991 when Tony Fitzgerald recommended that the Queensland Government support the World Heritage listing for Fraser Island, a debate has raged on over who the island is being managed for. Is it the current physical visitors to the island (estimated at about 350,00 pa) or is it for the much larger number of passive users of Fraser Island who aren't planning to visit it in the foreseeable future but who appreciate, without having to go there, its outstanding natural area in a world of increasingly man-modified landscapes?

Nowhere has this debate raged more strongly than over the proposal to create **vehicle free beaches** on Fraser Island. If 4WDs are to continue to be allowed access to Fraser Island, there are limited options for creating a vehicle free beach on the east coast of the island. The only convenient place where it can be accomplished is in the area immediately north and east of the ferry landing at Hook Point. Here there is an alternative road running close to the beach and parallel to it. The road built originally to facilitate sandmining is now rough and bumpy. It isn't as bad as many island inland roads. However because the beach is much smoother, most drivers prefer to drive their tough 4WDs along it whenever they can. They use the alternative road only at times of high tide when the beach is untrafficable. Most current physical visitors to Fraser Island are therefore opposing the closing of the beach BUT they also want the continuing option of using the road when they are forced to.

Strictly for the Birds

However, it is more than just motorists that use the beach. On 10 January specialist observers from the Queensland Waders study group with support from DERM walked the beach for a period of 1 ½ hours from North Spit to Hook Point. In that time they encountered 3,044 migratory waders (105 Grey Plovers, 209 Lesser Sand Plovers, 914 Greater Sand Plovers, 1356 Bar-tailed Godwits, 4 Whimbrels, 189 Greater Knots, 229 Red-necked Stints, 8 Curlew Sandpipers. They also encountered 129 resident waders. Most of these were Red-capped Plovers (129) but there were also surprisingly 2 Beach Stone-curlews and lamentably only two (2) Pied Oyster-catchers. Additionally though they counted the staggering number of almost 15,000 terns (22 Gull-billed Terns, 1 Caspian Tern, 13750 Common Terns, 1,165 Little Terns and 30 Crested Terns). All of the species of birds are threatened by motor traffic on the beach both through bird strikes (more frequent than reported) and disturbance that weakens the birds.



The issue of closing the beach then to motor traffic is a moral one of whether we should respect the rights of birds and the wishes of passive users of Fraser Island who want an undisturbed beach OR should the comfort of half of the current Fraser Island visitors (the other half come via Mary River Heads) prevail when there is an alternative (rough) road they can use 100% of the time rather than just 25% of the time.



The Positives of Bush Regeneration

By the time most members receive this MOONBI in March, a team of volunteer bush regenerators will be working away on a most positive program of bush regeneration in the Eurong township area where we have already helped to clean up garden waste left in a road reserve and establish three demonstration gardens to show landholders the attractive natives that can be planted in their own gardens.

More volunteers are needed for FIDO's Bush Regeneration project at Eurong, Fraser Island Sunday 13th to Saturday 19th May 2012. May and late August to early September are the best times to visit Fraser Island. May is usually the mildest and most benign time of the year on Fraser Island. It is still warm enough to swim in the lakes and creeks and the nights are mild. The sand tracks are still in good shape after the wet season but there is little likelihood of heavy rain. It isn't hot and humid and so there are ideal working temperatures.

In November FIDO made a great start to the Eurong gardens project by working cooperatively with the QPWS and the Fraser Coast Regional Council to establish three demonstration gardens in Eurong to show how native plants rather than exotics that have the potential to become weeds can be used. We have cleaned out rubbish and weeds from the roadside and public land and are in the process of returning more degraded areas to natural state. Landholders have been enthusiastic and we are keen to extend this project but more volunteers will help us accelerate this work. We can comfortably accommodate 11-12 people per operation.

Volunteers need to contribute \$200 each for the week to cover the cost of transport to and from Brisbane accommodation and keep for the week and need to be prepared to contribute 20 hours of bush regeneration work. As well as helping to improve the environment, John Sinclair will give you a personally guided tour of the island, that he knows better than anyone else, in the times when volunteers are not engaged in project work.

If you can't come in May you may wish to be advised of future bush regeneration programs in Spring for which dates have yet to be set. FIDO is also planning other voluntary projects on Fraser Island apart from bush regeneration that you may be interested in.

To register your interest please Email John Sinclair john@sinclair.org.au or ring him 0418 650 535

News in Brief

Each month FIDO sifts through a vast amount of information and reports relevant to the Great Sandy Region to be as well informed as possible on issues affecting not only Fraser Island, but the whole of the Great Sandy Region. FIDO also has to keep abreast of issues that extend globally and as such also impact on Fraser Island. These include climate change, population policies and even coal-seam gas because all of these can affect the environmental integrity of Fraser Island.

Hoax Hits Headlines: Believing what turns out to have been a tongue-in-cheek hoax Britain's *Telegraph* newspaper claimed that Fraser Island is home to "one of the worlds most dangerous beaches". It claimed, "*The seas surrounding Fraser Island ... are a no-go zone. That is unless you mind swimming with sharks and jellyfish, while battling strong rip currents. Head inland and you're likely to bump into some of the world's deadliest spiders, the odd saltwater crocodile, as well as dingoes, which are known to occasionally attack humans.*"

If any publicity is good publicity then Fraser Island certainly benefitted from this this misinformed report.

The World's Deadliest spider lives on Fraser Island: That would seem to be the inference in countless newspaper articles around the world coinciding with Pink Ribbon Day. The articles announced that University of Queensland's Dr David Wilson has stockpiled venom from the fangs of up to 10 Fraser Island funnel-webs for the two-year trial of chemicals from the venom that could be used to kill breast cancer cells. It is true that the Fraser Island Funnel webs are amongst the 10 deadliest spiders in the world but hitherto it hasn't been claimed to be the deadliest but now it is being used to help human life.

Grabbing the Headlines: The fire on 1 October near Kingfisher Resort gave the detractors of DERM's dingo management to vent their ire at the current policy claiming that the fire may have killed dingo pups. Their claims got headlines. The Community Advisory Committee was recently shown the results of the dingo tracking on Fraser Island providing compelling data on dingo behavior. It establishes that a vast amount of dingo activity occurs well away from the beach areas of Fraser Island and isn't seen by visitors. None of this even makes the "news".

Myrtle Rust: In contrast to the dingo fire speculation a more horrifying story hardly made the news. Only seven sentences were described the threat that could devastate Fraser Island. It has spread already to from Cairns to Victoria although it seems mainly limited so far to urban areas.

It is now in Hervey Bay and Gympie. FIDO is alarmed at the rapid spread of Myrtle Rust. The Fraser Coast Chronicle reported that myrtle rust was expected to spread across the Fraser Coast this summer, only six months after it was first found in the region. It went on to quote Biosecurity Queensland as saying, "*Myrtle rust can't be contained or eradicated, but the more we know about the disease the more we can learn about how best to manage it.*" If Myrtle Rust reaches Fraser Island this La Nina summer it could spread rapidly in the myrtaceous forest with devastating effect. It is already reported to be established in parts of the Fraser Coast region. Myrtle rust has been detected on an increasing number of eucalypts. *E. grandis*, *E. tereticornis*, *E. curtisii*, *E. planchoniana* and *E. cloeziana* have all fallen victim to this disease. Corymbia species including *C. torelliana*, *C. henryi* and *C. citriadora ssp. variegata* and even Melaleuca species have not escaped with *M. quinquenervia* and *M. formosa* confirmed as hosts.

Pigs and Cats: QPWS advises that while feral pigs are relatively common on the adjacent mainland, there is now a population of between 3 and 5 animals roaming between Hook Point and Moon Point. They plan to use heat sensing technology to track down and remove these vagrants before they link up and result in a permanent and larger population. Likewise more efforts are being made to understand and establish the extent of Fraser Island's feral cat population. Although the cats seem to be spread across island their numbers are not as high as on the mainland possibly due to the predation by dingoes.

Statutory Management Plan: QPWS advises that the re-write of the Great Sandy Region management plan is underway after the first round of public consultation last year. A review of the plan has been undertaken and a draft plan draft plan for internal review due in March 2012 before more public consultations leading to development of the final plan for approval prior to 30 June 2013. In the meantime the QPWS intends that an interim Statutory Plan be gazetted in June 2012.



One of Fraser Island's many tidal estuaries that feed into Great Sandy Strait. These estuaries provide vital habitat for many juvenile marine creatures while the creeks nourish marine life further afield. Photo taken 10 February 1990

World Heritage Renomination: Although QPWS called for submissions on the proposed enlarged Great Sandy World Heritage Area boundaries in March 2012 FIDO's submission that called for extensions was never formally acknowledged. FIDO is very keen to see that the proposed marine area is enlarged to include some off-shore submarine features that have been identified by researchers only since the original nomination was made. These submarine Chasms are part of the transportation network that helped create Fraser Island and Cooloola and are in themselves unique and of the likes known nowhere else in the world. FIDO will follow the renomination closely (if we are given a chance).

QPWS's VHF radio communication system on island is being upgraded for emergency services. Two new repeaters will be erected at Ungowa and Orchid Beach to complement repeaters at Bowarrady, Eurong and Sandy Cape. The future intention is to link them using a UHF system to enhance overall island coverage.

Protecting natural resources with plans and processes

MOONBI 124 reported on the tragedy that is killing the marine life in and around the Gladstone Harbour as the dredging continues on a massive scale as do the unnatural deaths of barramundi, turtles and even sharks (although as marine populations there decline, so does the rate of reported deaths). The Queensland Government has enacted some new measures in an attempt to avoid the repetition of similar events elsewhere.

Queensland's new Coastal Plan

After three years in the drafting and public consultation processes, Queensland's new Coastal plan came into effect on 3 February. It regulates development in areas it identifies as vulnerable to ocean impacts. In effect it applies to any proposed development less than 10 metres above the high tide mark and outside any existing urban settlement. It advances protection of essential features of the whole Queensland coast on which both coastal terrestrial and marine life depend.

Queensland's coast is threatened by unsustainable urban and industrial development, developments and ports, as well as from impacts of climate change. There is incontrovertible evidence that land use is impacting on marine life. As well as the proven impacts on the Great Barrier Reef from the use of fertilizers and chemicals in agriculture, there was a catastrophic plunging of the dugong population in the Great Sandy Region in the early 1990s as a result of flood run-off resulting in the loss of vast meadows of sea-grass in Hervey Bay.

FIDO applauds the new plan that has been criticized and opposed by many vested interests that will see many proposed developments that are contrary to the public interest now blocked in this critical area. For example, if the Coastal Plan had been in place earlier the proposed new subdivision along the Inskip Point peninsula wouldn't have got past first base.

Although the plan has been based on the more conservative estimates of sea-level resulting from climate change it can be extended when scientists review the sea-level estimates in the near future.

The Case of Rainbow Shores



FIDO was actively engaged in opposing the proposed subdivision of a large swathe of low-lying coastal land between Rainbow Beach and Inskip Point and between the road and the beach. This highly contentious subdivision was also opposed by the Queensland Government and the Gympie Regional Council as well as other locals. After many preliminary skirmishes the matter finally was finally heard in the Planning and Environment Court during a two week trial that started on 16 January. FIDO waits to see whether the environmental arguments advanced by all of the opponents prevail when the judgement is delivered.



What's in a Regional Plan: In launching the *Wide Bay Burnett Regional Plan* to 2020 Acting Local Government and Planning Minister, Anastasia Palaszczuk said in September that 98 percent of the region will be protected from intensive development, while the remaining areas have been classified as part of the urban footprint or rural living.

She said, "This level of protection will help maintain natural drawcards such as Fraser Island and the Great Sandy Strait Wetland, as well as other ecologically important areas, water ways and other green spaces."



Queensland State Elections

Queenslanders will go to the polls on 24 March to elect a new State Government. Most political pundits are tipping that the Labor Party that has formed the government for all but two years since 1989 will be replaced. FIDO is concerned about what implications this will have for the environment generally and for Fraser Island in particular because the environment in Queensland hasn't fared well under the current government.

Queenslanders are becoming increasingly demoralized by the "development at all costs" policies of both the Government and the alternative government that is taking a very heavy toll on the Queensland environment. While billions of dollars are spent on creating infrastructure to carry out the destruction of the environment there isn't enough money or enough talent to adequately protect what are supposed to be Queensland's protected areas. The big question is will Fraser Island fare better if there is a change.

Fraser Island Wild Rivers area: In a move to allow more mining on Cape York Peninsula the LNP Leader and alternative Premier, Campbell Newman has promised to revoke some of the Wild River declarations in Cape York Peninsula to appease some sectional Aboriginal and mining interests. FIDO has been assured though that Fraser Island's Wild Rivers status will not change.

Fishing: FIDO does view with concern various LNP announcements about eliminating green zones and opening up more marine areas for fishing when so little protection exists.

LNP Fraser Island policy: Another concern was answered by the LNP's announcements on Fraser Island particularly:

- The LNP is committed to ensuring the long-term survival of a healthy and sustainable wild population of dingoes on Fraser Island.
- The LNP will ensure Fraser Island once again fulfills its potential as a sustainable tourism destination in this spectacular World Heritage Area.
- The LNP will commission an immediate independent scientific peer review of the Fraser Island Dingo Management Strategy.

Sand gardens were once traditional for beachside Sunday School picnics but the Queensland Government has now lifted that lost art to a new level with ill-advised landscaping on the beach of Lake McKenzie (Boorangoora)