

# The Last Easter Cassia

A children's story by John Sinclair

Despite being the very best mates, Jacob Jones and Herbert Hancock were fiercely competitive. These two ten-year-olds challenged each other to see who could get the best marks in every subject at school, and who was the best athlete, who scored the most runs in cricket or who had the best computer game score. Life was an endless competition between these two friends. The competition was good for both of them because they were so evenly matched in both scholastic and sporting ability and the competition helped both of them improve their achievements.

It wasn't surprising that Jake and Herbie should be such good friends because their mothers were also very good friends and enjoyed many activities together. Their mums share many interests and passions. One of them was their passion for the bush and wildlife. Because of this they both became involved in bush regeneration.

When the September school holidays were approaching the two mothers wondered how they could share this break from school and keep their two energetic boys happy and busy and away from the television and the computer games that occupied them when there was nothing else to do. They decided to take them on a holiday to Fraser Island. They rented a house in Eurong for a week and decided that they would show the boys this beautiful World Heritage island.

They had a wonderful time going to Lake McKenzie (Boorangoora) with its pearly white beach and crystal clear water. They loved most Wabby Lake where the water had a slight green tinge but they loved it because of the big sandblow in front of it. They loved all of the lakes and they enjoyed the trip they did along the beach one day to Indian Head seeing the great outcrops of coloured sands and Eli Creek. Their favourite creek though was Wangoolba Creek that ran through the rainforest. Jake and Herbie had competitions to see who saw a fish or an eel in the clear water first.

For the whole holiday Jake and Herbie were competing as to who saw the most birds or the best birds or who saw a dingo first.

The outings though didn't occupy all of the time of the Hancocks and the Joneses. Whenever they were walking around they would remove any weeds they found. They always carried large plastic bags with them so that they could carry any weeds they found off to the rubbish bins at Eurong. They found cobbler's pegs and Mossman River Burr in surprising places. A ranger told them that the seeds and burrs

of these nasty weeds got caught in the fur of the dingoes and the dingoes were unintentionally spreading them through the island. It wasn't long before the two boys were vying to see who was best at finding and removing these little weeds.

Their mothers though were concerned also about the bigger weeds especially lantana and Easter Cassia. These were too large for the boys to see but they told the boys to keep an eye out for any Easter Cassias because over the years the bush regeneration volunteers had removed nearly all of the Easter Cassia from Eurong and they were keen to get every last one of them so that the village grew only native plants in future.

That gave Herbie and Jake a new challenge. They went off Easter Cassia spotting. They couldn't find many because the more obvious ones had all been removed. So they explored every nook and back yard in Eurong. After a while Jake found one lurking in a back yard and proclaimed that it was the last Easter Cassia. That was a challenge to Herbie who walked around the perimeter of the village until he found just one. He said that was the last Easter Cassia in Eurong but their mothers weren't so sure.

*"With weeds you always have to keep your eyes open because if you leave just one it doesn't take long for them to multiply into hundreds or thousands and then you have a real problem," Mrs. Jones told them. "So thanks for being so vigilant. If these are the last Easter Cassias and if no more seeds grow we might see Eurong free from these invasive weeds forever."*



**Easter cassia (*Senna pendula* var. *glabrata*) is a native to tropical America. It has been declared under Fraser Coast Regional Council's Local Law No. 3 (2010) for Fraser Island ONLY.**