



megapodium

**Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland
Brisbane Branch Inc. **SPRING 2011****

Meetings at The Royal Geographical Society of Qld, 237 Milton Rd, Milton (UBD 21 - L1). At 7.30pm on the fourth Tuesday of every month, except January and December.

Calendar



***ALL MEMBERS AND VISITORS ARE WELCOME TO ATTEND
OUR FREE MONTHLY PRESENTATIONS***

Tuesday 25 October	Brisbane Branch Public Meeting— Snakes of SEQ, Aaron Robertson
Sunday 30 October	Batty Boat Cruise, Brisbane River LIMITED TICKETS
Weekend 4-6 November	Moreton Island Camping Trip
Sunday 20 November	Batty Boat Cruise, Brisbane River SOLD OUT
Tuesday 22 November	Brisbane Branch Public Meeting— Urban habitats, Adrian Caneris
Saturday 3 December	Nature Walk and End of Year morning tea, 7.00am Raven Street Reserve & Downfall Creek Bushland Centre
Sunday 4 December	Batty Boat Cruise, Brisbane River
Thursday 26 January	Fundraising sausage sizzle, Carseldine Bunnings—volunteers needed!
Sunday 5 February	Batty Boat Cruise, Brisbane River
Tuesday 28 February	Brisbane Branch Public Meeting - 'Bites & Blights', Wayne R. Roberts, Biosecurity Qld
Sunday 4 March	Batty Boat Cruise, Brisbane River
Tuesday 27 March	Brisbane Branch Public Meeting - 'Working Together for Wildlife', Steve Jones & Noleen Brown, DERM
To be announced	Camping Weekend at Crystal Waters & visit to Wildlife Land Fund properties

"WPSQ Brisbane - Advocating Conservation through Education"

"The Branch advocates conservation through a diverse educational program including expert speakers at Monthly Public meetings, regular weekend and day trips in and around Brisbane, Batty Boat Cruises



Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland - Brisbane Branch Inc.

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Leonie Markwell: 3378 6974

Greg Miller: 3357 9009

Joanne Towsey: 3878 4025

**This newsletter is kindly printed by Durrington J. R. & Sons
Ph. 3892 6144**

Meeting Location & Date

Our meetings are held at The Royal Geographical Society of Qld, 237 Milton Rd, Milton. UBD Reference Map 21, L1.

Our meeting day is the 4th Tuesday of every month. The starting time is 7.30pm.

Train: Ipswich/Rosewood Line, Milton Stop.

Bus: All Buses along Coronation Drive, Stop 4, both inbound and outbound, then walk 700m to venue.



An electronic copy of our newsletter is available from our website (wildlife.org.au/) select "Join your local Branch ", then select Brisbane, then select the link to the newsletter

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Please make cheques payable to:

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95 William Street, Brisbane QLD 4000

You can also subscribe online at www.wildlife.org.au

Australian Brush-turkey. Family: **Megapodiidae**
 Image from: John Gould (1804-81) *The birds of Australia 1840-48*. 7 vols. 600 plates Artists: J. Gould and E. Gould; Lithographer: E. Gould.

Photo: Research Library © Australian Museum



WPSQ Annual General Meeting was held at the September Southern Branches Get-Together at Springbrook, hosted by the Gold Coast branch. Our branch report which was shown at the August meeting, was presented by Susan, our president. It is summarised at p 8.

Proactive lobbying is needed to combat the proliferation of Coal Seam Gas projects throughout QLD. The government is putting short term economic gain ahead of long term environmental and social damage. Wildlife Queensland (www.wildlife.org.au) has prepared a submission to protect agricultural land. A moratorium is needed until concerns are resolved.

Snakes are back on the agenda, having been postponed from our April meeting which was cancelled. Come along to the October meeting and hear more about the scaly inhabitants of South East Queensland from Aaron Robertson.

Queensland Gambling Community Benefit Fund confirmed that Brisbane Branch was successful in obtaining a grant towards the purchase of PA equipment, Batty Boat Cruise advertising material and educational booklets about flying foxes. Thanks to Susan who prepared the application.

Brisbane Branch committee members were reelected unopposed at the August AGM. Congratulations to Susan (President), Angela (Vice president), John (Treasurer), Mary (Secretary) and Greg, Leanne and Leonie (committee members)!

River cruising is becoming a popular holiday pursuit. Join our own special version of a river cruise, a Batty Boat Cruise, to experience the flying fox flyout at dusk from Indooroopilly Island. Dates, prices and booking details can be found on p 18.

In his search for monkey-faced bats and giant tree rats in the Solomon Islands, Tyrone Lavery found many other amazing creatures in this relatively unexplored habitat. Read more about his June presentation on p 11.

South East Queensland frog calls could be heard emanating from our July meeting although there were no frogs present. Instead, Harry Hines gave some very realistic imitations of local frog calls in his entertaining and informative presentation. For details, see p 12.

Batty Boat Cruise co-ordination, after many years, has now been handed over from John Markwell. Joanne Towsey kindly answered the call for a replacement co-ordinator. Jo was elected as a committee member at the September committee meeting.

Adrian Caneris will also speak on the subject of *Urban Habitat*. If you loved Darryl Jones' August presentation on birds and in urban environments (See p. 14) come to the November meeting. As we become more urbanised, animals have to adapt or populations will decline.

Now you can support our own organisation when buying Christmas cards. Brisbane Branch has produced a set of 10 cards featuring 5 beautiful wildlife images. These are printed on recycled paper. See details on p 6.

Ever wanted to get more involved in helping out our branch? The Batty Boat Cruise season is about to begin and we will need members to volunteer and help out onboard. Please let a committee member know if you would like to help out.



25 October, WPSQ public meeting, Royal Geographical Society of Queensland "Snakes of South East Queensland" Aaron Robertson.

Based on the Sunshine Coast, Snake Whisperer operates a reptile relocation service as well promoting co-operative living with native reptiles. Aaron will be covering several topics in his discussion, including ecology of local snakes, a photographic presentation of snakes found in SEQ, snake myths and truths, and snakebite first aid.

Sunday October 30 –Batty Boat Cruise, Brisbane River—LIMITED TICKETS

Experience the Brisbane River and our wonderful wildlife on this special sunset cruise to see the spectacular flying-fox fly-out. Details page 18.

Weekend 4-6 November—Moreton Island Trip

Full details of this trip are available in our Winter 2011 newsletter p 10. Cost is \$155 for members, with a discount of \$45 if you participate in a 3 hour weeding session. Departs 8.30am Friday 4th on the MiCat from Lytton. Price includes Micat Fare, tent accommodation, QPWS visitor fees, transport on the Island and Saturday night meal. BYO everything else. For booking or more info, contact Leanne Bowden on 3357 9009, 0419 795 755 or lean_greg@bigpond.com

Sunday November 20th –Batty Boat Cruise, Brisbane River - SOLD OUT!

Tuesday 22 November 2010 7.30pm WPSQ public meeting, RGSQ "Urban Wildlife - The good, the bad and the just plain ugly" Adrian Caneris, Managing Director, Biodiversity Assessment and Management.

Adrian knows urban wildlife habitats like the back of his hand, and is a down-to-earth and entertaining speaker. For more than 20 years, he has been involved in research, management, consulting, teaching and community based studies of terrestrial ecology, particularly vertebrate fauna. He is a mine of information and a straight talker on urban wildlife habitats. Adrian's talk is based



on real life experiences with your stories and encounters entwined into the discussion to make for a most entertaining and surprisingly informative evening by one of our long term Society members and a Director of the WPSQ Wildlife Land Trust.

Saturday 3 December, 7.00am Nature Walk and End of Year morning tea, Raven Street Reserve, (home to Downfall Creek Bushland Centre) 815 Rode Road, McDowell (near Chermside West/Stafford Heights) UBD Map 119 F16

Meet Greg and Leanne at the Downfall Creek Bushland Centre for a bird and nature spotting outing. After the walk, we'll have a BYO shared end of year morning tea. We'll walk through the Raven Street Reserve, across Hamilton Road via the wildlife land bridge to the Milne Hill Reservoir and return. The track is steep in some parts. Bring drinking water, sturdy shoes, hat, sunscreen, insect repellent, binoculars or camera, and morning tea to share after the walk. The



Reserve does have facilities and picnic tables, but as it's a busy time of year, we would be wise to also BYO our own chair/table. RSVP: Greg Miller & Leanne Bowden, 3357 9009, 0419 795 755 or email: lean_greg@bigpond.com

Sunday 4th December –Batty Boat Cruise, Brisbane River Details on p 18.

Thursday 26 January Fundraising BBQ, Carseldine Bunnings—volunteers needed!

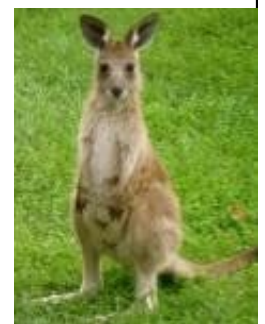
Tuesday 28th February 2012 WPSQ public meeting, RGSQ "BITES & BLIGHTS" Wayne R. Roberts, Biosecurity Qld When it comes to alien invaders attacking our wildlife - who do you call? Not Ghostbusters, but Biosecurity Qld. BQ coordinates the government's efforts to prevent, respond to, and recover from pests and diseases that threaten the environment. Fire Ants, Electric Ants and Myrtle Rust could soon be in your own backyard, and they're a danger. In fact, fire ants can be as much a threat to the environment as a cigarette lighter is to the Australian bush. Come and see some live fire ants, and learn more about how to recognise these invasive pests and assist in preventing their spread.



Tuesday 27 March 2012 WPSQ public meeting, RGSQ, "Working Together for Wildlife" Steve Jones & Noleen Brown, Dept of Environment & Resource Management. Did you know that you can access databases of wildlife information, as well as contribute information to those databases to ensure that a historical record is available? The Queensland Department of Environment & Resource Management (DERM) has wildlife and wetland resources available. They help to ensure that information is up-to-date, and that it's available to help protect species and habitats. Come along and hear from Steve Jones and Noleen Brown from DERM, about WildNet, WetlandMaps, Wildlife Online, and provide some feedback on strategies to deliver the information.



Date to be announced—Camping Weekend at Crystal Waters & visit to Wildlife Land Fund properties. Past President Brian Lowry and wife Grace are lucky enough to live at Crystal Waters Permaculture Village, a beautiful rural community nestled in the Mary River Valley in the Sunshine Coast Hinterland. Brian is also a director of the Wildlife Land Fund, which has two properties on the way to Crystal Waters, one at Witta Conservation reserve, and one at the Neil Holloway Conservation Reserve (Reesville). Brian and Grace proposed to lead a weekend based at Crystal Waters in October 2010, but unfortunately it was cancelled due to stormy weather. However, we hope to organise a visit sometime in 2012. Caravan sites, camping sites and bunkhouses are available. Crystal Waters is a great base to visit one or both WLFL reserves. For more information or to register your interest, contact Brian on brian.lowry@activ8.net.au or 54350318. For campground bookings phone 54944550. For project info, see: <http://crystalwaters.org.au> & www.wildfund.org.



Please support our branch and buy some Wildlife Queensland Christmas cards



There are 5 card designs using images from the front cover of Wildlife Australia magazine. They have been designed as a fundraiser for our branch and promotion for WAM and our society.

Cards are printed on hi-gloss recycled art paper. They will be sold in packs of 10 cards (2 of each design) with 10 envelopes for only \$10 / pack. Cards and envelopes are printed on recycled paper.

Cards will be available for purchase from our branch meetings, head office, Batty Boat cruises and the online Wildlife Queensland store (+ postage).

There's an election around the corner....

It's election time the Government could call an election any time between now and April 2012. It is vital that we all work together in the build up toward the next election to get the environment on the agenda. Therefore we must act now to show them that they can not ignore the environment. If you look at Queensland's political history, once a Government is in they generally stay for a while in that respect this election is vitally important for the future of our wildlife!

Now is the time to get in touch with candidates and the public in order to raise the profile of our environmental issues. Write them a letter, request a meeting or simply make a few phone calls and see what they have to say. Together we can put some pressure on early and show our major political parties that voters DO care about the environment. We might see them start to create good environmental policy or at least get them to acknowledge that the environment is not an issue to be ignored for the up coming election.

Wildlife Queensland Election Priorities

1. Expanding and building resilience into our protected area estate to ensure it is well managed and resourced and that it addresses climate change impacts.
2. Protect our marine life – develop a network of marine national parks in the Gulf of Carpentaria, enhance current marine parks to ensure all areas are adequately represented, well managed and resourced so that threatened species such as dugongs and turtles are fully protected and address unsustainable fishing practises
3. Protection of Queensland's special places - wild rivers, Cape York, world heritage areas
4. Control mining and coal seam gas to ensure protection of the Great Artesian Basin and other aquifers, prime agricultural lands, nature refuges, and other environmentally sensitive areas
5. Legal Reform Package for Major Development and Urban Planning – reforms are required across all planning legislation to provide strong legal protection to biodiversity and community appeal rights and to provide stronger concurrence powers to the Department of Environment and Resource Management.

Report - Nature Walk Gold Creek Reservoir Saturday 20 August

Nature was kind to the 8 members who met at the end of Gold Creek Rd, Brookfield at 7.30am for a nature walk at Gold Creek Reservoir. We were treated to perfect weather and some great vistas of water and forests. Avian species were well represented, with the sights and sounds of 43 bird species, including some really good views of a few of our more strikingly coloured birds - Spotted Pardalote, Sittella, Scarlet Honeyeater and both Rufous and Golden Whistler. Even the car park is a good spot for hearing a wide range of birdcalls. Our walk was slow and relaxing, enabling everyone to see each bird species found. We didn't see any reptiles or other animals.

We viewed the birds on the dam, along the overflow creek, and were able to walk across the base of the stepped spillway of the dam, where the circuit track enters. However, as the circuit track is quite overgrown and steep at that point, we opted to walk up the roadway, past the Moggill Creek Catchment Group cottage. We continued up and up to the Powerline towers, before returning for the next best



thing to walking - a shared morning tea/lunch and the opportunity to discuss what we'd seen.

Birds seen or heard

Pacific Black Duck, Hardhead, Australasian Grebe, Brown Cuckoo-Dove, Peaceful Dove, Little Pied Cormorant, Pacific Baza, Grey Goshawk, Sulphur-Crested Cockatoo, Australian King-Parrot, Pale-headed Rosella, Azure Kingfisher, Laughing Kookaburra, White-browed Treecreeper, Fairy-wren spp, White-browed Scrubwren, Spotted Pardalote, Striated Pardalote, Lewin's Honeyeater, Yellow-faced Honeyeater, Bell Miner, Noisy Miner, Scarlet Honeyeater, Noisy Friarbird, Eastern Whipbird, Varied Sittella, Varied Triller, Golden Whistler, Rufous Whistler, Grey Shrike-thrush, Figbird, Olive-backed Oriole, Pied Butcherbird, Australian Magpie, Pied Currawong, Grey Fantail, Willie Wagtail, Torresian Crow, Magpie-lark, Eastern Yellow Robin, Silvereye, Welcome Swallow, Red-browed Finch.



BRISBANE BRANCH REPORT

**1 July 2010—30 June
2011**

Number of branch members: 136



Overview

Brisbane Branch continued to advocate conservation through education by organizing nine public meetings; four Batty Boat cruises; two camps at Moreton Island; hosting of the 2010 Society AGM and Community event; sale of Entertainment

books; and contributing to the Brisbane City Council's World Wetland day event. Our membership at 136, is an increase of 13 since last year. Over the last five years, we have averaged 132 members, ranging from the lowest membership in 2010 of 123 to the highest in 2009 of 139. We donate our membership fees back to Head Office.

Committee

Our 7-member committee meets monthly. Susan Vernon has been our President since 2007. Angela Dean has been Secretary since the 2008 AGM, but this year changed to being our Vice-president. Mary Durrington, a long term member who returned to committee early in 2008 has taken on the role of Secretary. John Markwell has held the role of Treasurer since 2001. At the beginning of 2011, we almost had a replacement Treasurer, but some health issues arose for her, and she wasn't able to take over. The other three committee members, Leonie Markwell, Greg Miller and Leanne Bowden have all been involved for quite some time. For the 2011/12 Batty Boat season, John Markwell has handed over his co-ordinating role to newcomer Joanne Towsey, who may also join our committee. We had a position of project co-ordinator for the former Boondall to Tinchi Tamba Branch on committee, following their request to amalgamate with us



in 2009, but they have now joined the Brisbane North branch, commencing in mid 2010.

Environmental Activities

Speaker Program

We're very comfortable holding our meetings at the Royal Geographical Society of Queensland rooms at Milton, where the RGSQ, Birds Queensland and the Field Naturalists also meet. We cancelled our April 2011 meeting, as it coincided with the 5 day Easter/Anzac Day long weekend, with many people away. Attendance numbers ranged from 14 to 59, an average of 29 attendees, a combination of members and non-members, as many of the speakers also belong to other organizations, and they spread the word of their talk amongst their own networks. While we target Universities, to provide opportunities for the enthusiastic younger generation researchers to present their work, we also hosted some regular long-term speakers from universities, local government and other conservation groups:

- July - Martin Finland from Geckoes explained how his heart-winning animals are great representatives to demonstrate importance of diverse conservation issues.
- August - Angela Dean, involved in a number of under water monitoring programs with The University of Queensland, explained why "Corals are Cool".
- September - We heard some "Plane Environmental Talking" from the Brisbane Airport Corporation Environmental Manager, on how they manage a safe environment for humans whilst maintaining one of the largest wildlife habitats in Brisbane.
- October - Dr Darryl Jones from Griffith University, fired with enthusiasm having just returned from a sabbatical to Europe, wowed us as the first audience



to hear the results of his research into how the EU manages to "Reconnect a fragmented landscape" with staggeringly big underpasses, overpasses and viaducts plus legislation with teeth.

- November - Following the Government's announcement on the phase out of mining on North Stradbroke Island, Jan Aldenhoven from the Stradbroke Island Management Organisation and John Sinclair, champion and activist for Fraser Island, came to explain what problems are yet to be faced.
- February - A very long question time resulted after Robyn Jones talked on how the Brisbane City Council "Manages Invasive Species". It was eye-opening for some attendees to learn of the number of ferals in local natural areas, deer swimming the Brisbane River and foxes under houses.
- March - We became part of the 0.001% of the population who know a little more about spiders after hearing Robert Whyte's "Spidiversity" presentation on his spider research at The Gap.
- May - We went back under the sea to hear about "The Secret Life of Mantas" from University of Queensland PhD student Fabrice Jaine.
- June - Another UQ student, Tyrone Lavery described the beginnings of his PhD, searching for "Monkey-faced bats and giant tree rats" in the Solomon Islands.

Our speakers were presented with a thank you gift, generally something that promotes the Branch and Society, such as a Batty Boat Cruise T-shirt or tickets, or subscription to Wildlife Australia Magazine.

AGM

In September 2010, our Branch hosted the

annual "Wildlife in your Community" get-together and Society AGM. It was held at Mt Glorious, with members of the local community also enjoying the morning bird walks and afternoon workshops, expanding their knowledge on simple ways to care for wildlife. At the dinner, John Markwell received an award for his work in organizing the Batty Boat Cruises. The weekend was a lot of work for the committee, but very gratifying.

Moreton Island

We held two weekend camps at Blue Lagoon in November 2010 and March 2011. The Island is a great environmental resource on our doorstep, and a wonderful place to appreciate nature. It was interesting to see the amazing landscape changes the January rains had induced with the track to Blue Lagoon becoming a river and lake system instead. Once again, part of the time was dedicated to weeding out Mossman River Grass.



Boondall to Tinchy Tamba project (B2TT)
Members of the B2TT project were involved with the Brisbane City Council for the World Wetlands Day activities in February. A sub-

stantial contribution was made to an Eastern Curlew Costume that forms part of a Shorebird Education display project.

Newsletter and Promotion

We produced four newsletters during the year, distributed either in hard or soft copy as requested by members. Editions contain our Calendar of events, as well as environmental hints, monthly talks reviews, any fundraising promotions and contact information for other local environmental organizations. They are a good resource to promote WPSQ and our Branch, particularly when copies are made available at the shared Royal Geographical Society venue, on the Batty Boat Cruises, and emailed to a range of other environmental organisations.

Fund Raising

Grant

At the end of this financial year, we were successful in receiving an \$8,829.98 grant from the Gambling Community Benefit Fund. Funds will be used to design and print a 12 page booklet to increase learning on the Batty Boat Cruises about the river, history, bats and living with bats in Brisbane, as well as printing other promotional items, advertising and purchasing AV equipment.

Batty Boat Cruises

We held 4 Batty Boat cruises over the past year, one in October, November and December 2010, and March 2011. Our planned January and February trips had to be cancelled due to the flooding. We're hoping the 2011/2012 year will still be successful, despite the furore over Hendra virus and horse deaths. These trips are not only educational, but raise a great deal of money,

which our Branch distributes between Head Office and Bat Carer groups. Prices have remained the same for quite a few years, so we will be increasing the prices slightly commencing from the October 2011 trip.

Entertainment Books

After 5 years of selling Entertainment Books, regular non-member buyers just keep coming back to us, as they want to support an environmental cause. Around \$500 was raised in 2011, the money supporting the cost of the meeting venue. Brisbane branch stickers are placed in the books to remind buyers all year round of the WPSQ cause.

Sausage Sizzle

We applied again to run a Sausage Sizzle at Bunnings Stafford, because it was such a good fundraiser last year. However, hundreds of groups apply, and we were unsuccessful in our bid.

Merchandising

At the end of 2010, we used funds raised from the Sausage sizzle to organize bumper stickers and bookmarks with the generic WPSQ logo, and distributed them to all other branches to use as promotional items. Other funds are being used to produce some Brisbane branch name tags for members who attend the monthly meetings.

Future Plans

Our future plans are to:

- Organize wildlife Christmas cards, again with generic logo, to promote the Society and Wildlife Australia Magazine;
- Apply for further grants for generic promotional materials, presentation resources and computer equipment;
- Continue with our monthly educational speaker program;
- Continue our fundraising projects of Batty Boat cruises, sale of Entertainment Books, and Sausage Sizzle at Bunnings;
- Assist on the 50th anniversary committee;
- Arrange campouts on Moreton Island to assist with weeding programs;
- Arrange nature walks and camping activities to encourage members out into the environment;
- Promote diverse wildlife causes, groups and activities in our newsletter and at our meetings.



In search of monkey-faced bats and giant tree rats in the Solomon Islands

Tyrone Lavery, The University of Queensland

Tyrone addressed members at our June meeting. He commenced a PhD with the University of Queensland in early 2010, investigating aspects of island biogeography and the diversification of species, seemingly choosing the most exotic and unspoilt place he could - the 6 islands of the volcanic Solomons.

"The Solomon Islands have long provided an ideal scenario for studying the processes that lead to speciation and the diversification of life. It has proven a very attractive region for naturalists; with scientists such as Ernst Mayr and Jared Diamond formulating some of their key theories on the avian fauna of the region.

One reason islands are so fascinating for biogeographers, is the examples of rapid speciation that can be observed. Birds such as the White-eyes have undergone

'explosive radiations' and examples of where speciation has even occurred on a single island can be observed across altitudinal gradients.

The rapid and fascinating speciation on tropical islands is well appreciated. However, people often consider islands to be 'dead ends' that receive fauna from the continents and give little in return. Research in the Solomon Islands is increasingly demonstrating that this is not the case. Tyrone gave the example of monarch flycatchers, a group that have diversified greatly in the Solomon Islands and from there colonised Australia and New Guinea 'upstream' to give rise to our Spectacled and Black-faced Monarchs.

There is a misconception that scientific knowledge of mammals is rather complete. Tyrone soon realised that this is not true of Melanesian mammals. The patterns of distribution for monkey-faced bats and arboreal rats highlight the gaping holes in where other species should occur and may remain to be discovered.

Every time Tyrone visits the cloud forest, he finds something new. Some examples were a new species of frog, a grasshopper with rastafarian colours, a crocodile skink, green moths and wonderful frogs with eyelashes.



Speaker Tyrone Lavery (right) with visitor Melanie Venz

The islands still have a rich cultural tradition, some of which contains the remnants of magic referred to as *Kastom*. An intriguing example of this took place in the week before Tyrone arrived at one of his field sites on Kolombangara Island. A field guide removed flowers from a tambu site and in the middle of the night was bitten on the face by a centipede! The excruciating pain lasts for 24 hours, but luckily an 8 year old boy has been gifted with the ability to perform *kastom* magic and can heal the bites.

The pioneers of western natural history in the Solomon Islands were Christian missionaries. It was sometimes risky business as headhunters there were regarded as some of the fiercest ever known. Today field work is much easier, although still testing as the conditions are always wet and field members persist on a diet of rice and tinned tuna for weeks.

As with anywhere, there are immense pressures on the environment in the Solomon Islands, mostly from foreign logging companies.

Tyrone highlighted several ecotourism ventures trying to provide income for local people in a sustainable way. He urged people to



visit and gave some useful websites: www.kolomgangara.org; www.tetepare.org; and www.wildernesslodge.org.

Frog Diversity in Brisbane

Harry Hines, Queensland Parks & Wildlife Service

Have you heard male frogs advertising their services? Sure, you have! At our July meeting, Harry Hines from the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service explained that males call to attract a mate (advertisement call), while females which are usually larger than the males, rarely call, except for a release call to ward off attack or unwanted attention.

Brisbane is particularly fortunate in that it can boast a fantastic diversity of frogs for an urban environment. In the greater Brisbane



area, there are about 30 species from four families. The audience was treated to a litany of frog calls with matching photographs as Harry catalogued them all.

Interesting snippets about some species are as follows, starting with "the elephant in the room":

Cane toads (recently reclassified as *Rhinella marina*) are widespread in Brisbane. They are toxic at all stages of development. Ingestion by predators that have not co-evolved with cane toads (most Australian predators) typically results in a gruesome death. Their tadpoles are comparatively small and can be confused with those of several native species, especially the tusked frog. Toadlets, too, are very like some local species. Therefore, for control purposes, it is better to target adults and eggs, the latter in distinctive strings. Ponds preferred by cane toads are shallower with sloping sides and sparse vegetation at the edge. To avoid having cane toads breed in ornamental garden ponds, they should be made deeper with steep sides and densely vegetated edges and or elevated.

The Striped Marsh Frog

(*Limnodynastes peronii*) is the most widespread frog in Brisbane. It is known as "the dripping tap frog" because of its

call that can be heard at any time of the year, day or night. Its tadpoles are interesting too as they have a lateral sensory line like that of a fish.



The Tusked Frog

(*Adelotus brevis*) is considered vulnerable across its habitat, but there is quite a good population locally. Females use flanges on their fingers to whip up a "meringue" for their eggs.

The Ornate Burrowing Frog

(*Platyplectrum ornatum*) is sometimes delivered with a load of sand. Colour and patterns can vary.

The Great Barred Frog (*Mixophyes fasciolatus*) has a distinctive 'wark' call and can be found in areas such as Gold Creek and Mt Nebo. It comes out during summer storms and breeds in slow streams and ponds. The tadpoles are large. The lifespan of barred frogs may be up to 20 years.

Brood Frogs (*Pseudophryne*) lay larger, but fewer eggs and the male probably provides some parental care. Females lay eggs in wet leaf litter. The eggs can remain in a dormant state, ready to hatch when the site becomes flooded.

There are two types of green tree frogs that are widespread in Brisbane, the **Graceful Tree Frog**, (*Litoria gracilentata*) which is Brisbane City Council's faunal emblem and the **Green Tree Frog** (*Litoria caerulea*), familiar from letterboxes and toilet cubicles of old. They call during summer storms.

There are a number of frogs that have gone from the Brisbane area. **The Gastric Brooding Frog** (*Rheobatrachus silus*) from the Conondale and Blackall Ranges and the **Mount Glorious Torrent Frog** (or Southern Dayfrog *Taudactylus diurnus*) have not been seen for decades, probably the victims of the amphibian chytrid fungus. The **Green -striped Frog** (*Cyclorana alboguttata*) and

the **Salmon-striped Frog** (*Limnodynastes salmini*) have also disappeared. **The Cascade Tree Frog** (*Litoria pearsoniana*) has declined in the past, but populations seem to have recovered recently.

Threats to frogs are:

- Chytrid fungus (discovered in 1998),
- Loss of habitat, especially ephemeral wetlands, which have largely been filled because they are seen as breeding grounds for mosquitoes
- Degradation of habitats - pollution, weed invasion, mowing
- Introduced predators, such as mosquitofish, tilapia and red-eared sliders.

Important areas for frogs within the Brisbane City Council area are:

- Karawatha Forest (23 species)
- Brisbane Forest Park and the D'Aguiar Range
- Moreton Island, especially for acid frogs.

Things we can do to encourage frog populations are:

- Inform and educate the public about biodiversity and threats
- Control weeds and exotic animals,
- Don't move frogs or fish
- Recreate good habitats, such as Bowman Park.



Speaker Harry Hines (right) with visitor Andrea Fullagar

Heaven or hell: Why some birds love cities and most don't

Darryl Jones, Griffith University

Why is it so? At our August meeting, Associate Professor Darryl Jones, a Deputy Director of the Environmental Futures Centre at Griffith University, got us all thinking on this question. There really is a lot to learn from birds. There was also an important message for WPSQ for the future.

Darryl started his talk by mentioning the 2003 Urban Wildlife Workshop that WPSQ held and how unique and relevant it was. Once, ecology was only studied well away from cities, which is slightly absurd, given that the majority of people live in cities and interact with wildlife in an urban environment. His field of Urban Ecology is really becoming a major field of research.

It has taken a long time to acknowledge that humans are indeed part of the environment, and now maps are produced of "Anthropogenic Biomes of the World". Previously our biome type maps showed patterns related to climate, and we became familiar with yellow bands for desert areas, green for rainforests etc. Now there's a more multi-disciplinary approach, and patterns can be mapped detailing the results of sustained direct human interaction.

The world is a city, over 50% of the world's people currently live in cities. In Australia this figure is 88%. Every year another 1.8%



of the Australian population move to cities. In some third world countries the rate is even higher. In Tanzania, it is 6.4%. There is a reverse trend in some eastern bloc countries such as Estonia, where people are actually returning to the country because conditions in the cities are so bad. Overall however, the prediction is that by 2020, 83% of the world's people will live in cities. We are now primarily an urban species, and there are all sorts of implications arising out of this high rate of urbanization.

URBAN SPRAWL = FRAGMENTATION

Urban sprawl is the transformation of rural land into suburbs. The houses in these suburbs often have very little land around them. Australia now builds the largest houses in the world. The spread generally results in no connectivity between urbanized green spaces, which become islands amidst the roads and houses. How do animals live in this, and how does biodiversity exist?

When Darryl was an undergraduate in 1979, in Wagga Wagga, he decided to write his first project on Blackbirds, an exotic species that his mother had observed appearing in their backyard. But when he went in search of literature on urban birds, knowing that in 1883, the Acclimatisation Society introduced foreign species to Melbourne, he couldn't find any Australian studies, only ones carried out in the UK and USA. So his project became the first urban bird study in Australia.

INITIAL GENERALISATIONS

More Individuals: urban areas have more individuals animals, but less diversity.

Homogenisation: In the CBD of any capital city e.g. London, Toyko, Sydney, the same range of species were present - sparrows, starlings, pigeons as well as mammals such as black rats and house mice.

Dominance by exotics: The introduced House Sparrow used to be the most common bird seen.

Nature in cities of little value: That was the general thought - there was no point in the animals—people just didn't care.

Now studies show the following features of

an urban environment:

FEATURES

Urban places are full of **change**, e.g. land bordering Mt Coot-tha changing from forest to housing developments.

There's lots of **disturbance** – bikes, cars, people. There's lots of **noise**.

The **lights** never go out, something that historically is not known; it is unique to our current urbanisation.

There are a range of **risks** and different dangers, e.g. from cars, dogs.

Competition is everywhere; there is a greater concentration of animals and all are competing for the same space.

All are major challenges to animals, yet they survive. So what are the characteristics of those animals that survive in the city? What does it take to be a success?

URBAN SURVIVAL

Getting used to people

You learn to live with them, suppress your natural responses. E.g. Magpies no longer respond as they used to; in the 1800's they used to be very shy. In the bush now, they still fly when a human is up to a kilometre away. But, closer to the city, the distance is smaller, down to 60 metres. In the city, humans can get within 2 metres or less. They have become habituated to people, and that helps them to survive. And it's not just birds - water dragons are the same.

Adapting to live with stress

Cortisol, a hormone released in response to stress, pumps through the system when stressed. Researchers in Germany took Blackbird chicks as soon as they were hatched and moved them from the city to the country and vice versa. They found that chicks from the city had less Cortisol, indicating they were less stressed. Birds who had lived in the city for generations passed on the de-stressed hormone levels. In Australia, city magpies have gone through the barrier, they are not stressed, and they just treat a human like any other predator.

Enhanced brood defence

Magpies are very intent on chick survival. Male and female have long partnerships and both care for chicks. When an aggressive

male is out defending his territory, the female has to do more feeding of the young. When an aggressive male is removed, an opportunity arises for a new male to move in, and he feeds the chicks even more. Why? He takes the opportunity of a lifetime, as it's his only way into the territory.

Doing what you do well

In this new urban environment, do birds change? Some do the same thing and do it well. For instance, Turkeys and swallows don't re-adapt, there is no change in their fundamental behaviour - they build their mounds or nests as they have always done.

Specialist or generalist

The brush-turkey is a true specialist, but in a generalist environment. In 1991, when Darryl did a scientific study, he quoted that turkeys would not survive because of the high number of cat kills. Yet they have survived, despite 96% ending up dead. He surmises they must be surviving due to the enormous numbers of eggs laid. Also, they are the only birds where gender can be determined by the temperature of incubation. At 31°C, mostly females emerge as 80% of males die. At 36°C mostly males emerge. At 34°C, 50% of each survive.

Adapting to new conditions

Crows – In Brisbane, there are at least 29 roosts with more than 200 birds. Outside cities, they never roost. This is a major change in key behaviour. It is believed they do this to learn about food resources.

Guided by the light

Our most common urban bird, all over Australia, is the Rainbow Lorikeet. The Carina Leagues club attracts over 100,000 birds roosting at night. All lorikeet roosts are well lit. Why? Parrots cannot see at night, so it's much safer to get lots of friends together and go where you can see to avoid preda-





tors – and it works.

Hazards of junk food

So many food scraps are thrown away, particularly in school yards. People often feed magpies processed meat, but this leads to extremely high cholesterol – just like for us. Seagulls also suffer – a study of Silver Gulls in Tasmania showed these landfill feeders are 35% heavier, they have less success in raising chicks and they die younger.

Behavioural innovation

Here we can look at birds of related species, such as the white and straw-necked ibis – the former is abundant, and the latter does not come near humans. A feature of success is how many different ways a bird uses to find food. The white ibis has 36 different foraging actions, a vast array of ways to find food. The straw-necked has just 8 foraging actions. Crows are seriously smart—the New Caledonian crow that makes a variety of different tools from twigs, wire etc. Ravens and crows also have more 'language' than other birds—a Torresian crow has more than 38 different calls.

Living in a noisy world

Tests have been undertaken near factories, where noise levels can be mapped from loudest closest to the factory, getting lower further away. Observations can be made as to which birds have left, and which ones have stayed on. It seems the ones that stay have stopped making their own noise, as they just can't be heard anyway. Others **speak up** if it is really noisy, like the Australian Rosella and the Red Wattlebird that have loud calls. Some **change pitch**. A 6-year study was done in a Melbourne housing estate with increasingly busy roads - the Golden Whistler left because of the noise,

but the Yellow-faced honeyeater stayed on.

Not adapting to new risks

You don't learn if you are killed. At Brisbane Airport, kestrels are the number one bird strike species – about 120 a year. They never learn to stay away from planes. The principal cause of death of young magpies is cars; they just never learn to become aware of how to avoid them.

Mixed fortunes

In Canberra, there's been a 29-year garden bird survey. One finding is that sparrow numbers are down whilst Rainbow Lorikeets are up. This may be related to the high nectar species that we now plant, providing a favourable habitat for lorikeets. However, sparrows are declining the world over. Why?

The extinction of experience

As we grow up in cities, there is no relationship with true nature, unless we travel out to a National Park. People may no longer value nature worldwide, because they are so far removed from it, and there is no environmental awareness. An example is when some young people were asked – why should we save whales? Some responded that we don't need to save them - we have the video. This is a direct outcome of lack of true experience with nature.

And surely this is why it is important for us, members of Wildlife Queensland, to ensure that our young people stay in touch with nature and are educated about the importance of biodiversity and its conservation. There is still so much to learn.



Speaker Darryl Jones with member Lorna Ginn

NEARBY WPSQ BRANCHES & HEAD OFFICE

Did you know that WPSQ is the oldest, largest and most respected wildlife-focused conservation group in the State of Queensland? Founded in 1962, the Society is a community-based, non-profit organisation consisting of 24 branches throughout the State, committed to an ecologically sustainable future for people and wildlife.

Your Brisbane branch is just one of these branches. Information on all the others is available on the www.wildlife.org.au website.

Our Head Office is at 95 William Street, Brisbane, Qld 4000 on telephone (07) 3221 0194 or e-mail wpsq@wildlife.org.au.

They are always in need of volunteers for

office work, consultation, fieldwork, hands-on surveys and special events.

Other WPSQ Branches in the Brisbane area also conduct regular meetings to which they invite expert speakers and conduct projects and other activities (contact them or check website first for details).

Bayside Branch: last Friday of the month
At the Redlands IndigiScapes Centre,
17 Runnymede Road, Capalaba

Kedron Brook Branch: 3rd Tuesday of every
2nd month

At the Downfall Creek Bushland Centre,
815 Rode Rd, McDowall (UBD 118 F16)

For more information on the Web

Alan Gennings' "Moreton Experience": www.moretonexperience.com

Bat Conservation & Rescue Qld. Inc. (formerly Batcare Brisbane) :
www.bats.org.au

Birds Queensland: www.birdsqueensland.org.au

Brisbane City Council Get Wild Program:
www.brisbane.qld.gov.auCC:STANDARD:528319102:pc=PC_2020

Centenary & District Environment Action: www.cdea.org.au

Friends of Pooh Corner: www.poohcorner.info

Moggill Creek Catchment Group: www.moggillcreek.org.au

Moreton Island Protection Committee: www.moretonisland.org.au/links.htm

THECA The Hut Environmental and Community Association Inc:
www.theca.asn.au/

The Royal Geographical Society of Qld: www.rgsq.org.au

Wildlife Land Fund Ltd: www.wildfund.org

Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland:
www.wildlife.org.au



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Flying-foxes, or fruit bats, are essential for our Australian forest health, through distance pollination and seed dispersal they are true forest makers. While everyone sleeps, flying-foxes make forests!

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