



2020-2021 Branch Reports



Branch Reports

2020–21



WPSQ working for wildlife

Note: In accordance with section 17.8 of the Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland constitution, each branch of the society was requested to submit a report on their activities for the preceding financial year.

Please note that the Branch reports are not always presented in this document in strict alphabetical order.

Branch name	Page number
Bayside	3
Brisbane	5
Capricorn	6
Cassowary Coast - Hinchinbrook	7
Far North Qld	9
Fraser Coast	10
Gold Coast & Hinterland	12
Kedron Brook Catchment	14
Logan	15
Scenic Rim	16
Sunshine Coast & Hinterland	18
Toowoomba	20
Townsville	21
Upper Dawson	23

BAYSIDE BRANCH

Steve Homewood, President

In common with other Branches, we had to discontinue our program of monthly meetings last year but recommenced this February with Geckoes Wildlife. Pleasingly, we have averaged around 30 for subsequent presentations on powerful owls, venomous spiders, Peel Island and Antarctica.

Our monthly newspaper and Wildlife diary continued to be circulated around the community with information on wildlife issues and local walks.

The Cicada film festival last year was a successful online event. Despite all the restrictions and challenges, 20 competitors produced excellent films that show our youth can be relied on to spread the word on the multitude of threats to our environment. Films can always be seen on YouTube under "Cicada Film Festival". Prizes totalled \$4000, with sponsors fully funding the festival.

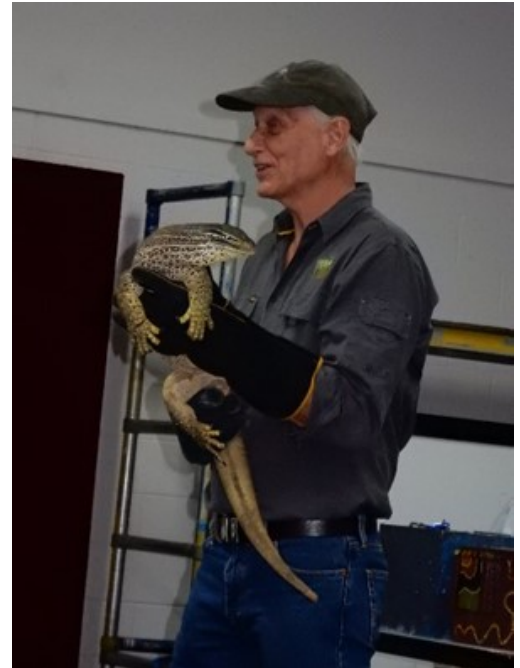
Clean Up Australia Day attracted 66 participants to our coastal site at Redland Bay. Unfortunately, there is still plenty of rubbish; we recycled 106 containers, abandoned crab pots – one of which had caused the demise of a turtle – and, of course, face masks.

Education is still the key. There appears to be a concentrated effort to reduce single-use plastics and polystyrene packaging within set target dates.

Our container recycling effort was restricted this year but did add \$1100 to funds. We were able to donate monies to the Wildlife Land Fund, Geckoes and two community groups.

The Branch continues to face local challenges with the security of bushland, and consequently our wildlife in many areas threatened with commercialisation through development and tourism. Over the past 12 months, the community has been asked for feedback on local projects, dogs off-leash in recreation areas, "Shoreline", 5000 lots, the Birkdale Community (Olympic Whitewater) Project, and mountain bikes in conservation areas.

What is concerning is that, increasingly, along with other groups, we do not appear to have any direct acknowledgement or commentary from the proponents on our submissions. Without more dialogue and community involvement, with all its wealth of experience, the outcome for our local environment looks increasingly dire.



Martin Finland at our first meeting of the year



Mountain bike trails in a Conservation Park

After nearly eight years of planning, the around 4000 page EIS for Toondah harbour is due out for comment soon: the proposed 30 year 3600-unit development IN Moreton Bay will greatly impact wetland habitat in an international Ramsar area, to the detriment of all marine and shore life fundamental to local ecosystems, with apparently little thought to climate change. All levels of government apparently support this aberration.



Site of 3600-unit development IN wetlands Cleveland

It was a sad year with the passing of three members who had many awards for outstanding environmental achievement. I thank all our members, supporters, our committee and WPSQ for all their input, help and guidance throughout this mixed year. Our local environment cannot survive without your advocacy. Unknown changes to our normal lives will continue to present challenges until groups can regularly meet again. Whilst initially our environment had some relief, due to travel restrictions from our growing population, there is now an unbridled focus on local tourism and job creation with all its downsides.

“The scale of the mess we leave behind is proportionate to the level of respect we have for others.”
Stewart Stafford

The Branch continues to face local challenges with the security of bushland and consequently our wildlife in many areas threatened with commercialisation through development and tourism. The long awaited SEQ Koala Conservation strategy was a lamentable, with mapping leaving out many areas, including the Redlands, of viable koala habitat and creating areas where koalas have rarely been sighted. Planning exemptions mean it is “business as usual” for further habitat destruction and creating enclaves.

Bayside Branch is financially strong and whilst in common with many groups in that our membership has declined slightly, we continue to be involved with the community and other organisations. Once again, I thank all our members, supporters and our committee and WPSQ for all their input, help and guidance throughout this mixed year, our local environment cannot survive without your advocacy.

This current year of uncertainty will continue to present a challenge until groups can meet again. Whilst initially our environment had some relief due to travel restrictions from our growing population, there is now an unbridled focus on local tourism and job creation with all its downsides.

“We owe it to ourselves and to the next generation to conserve the environment so that we can bequeath our children a sustainable world that benefits all”.
Wangari Maathai

BRISBANE BRANCH

Ginny Barbour, Vice President



Like many Branches and organisations, 2020–2021 was a difficult year for getting together, with the repeated lockdowns and, for our Branch in particular, the concern many people had about gathering indoors to attend our speaker meetings. Over late 2020 and early 2021, we kept our members informed through newsletters.

In April at our AGM of this year, we bid farewell with many thanks to longstanding members of the Brisbane Branch Committee:

President Leanne Bowden, Treasurer Susan Vernon and Committee member, Greg Miller. Leanne, Susan and Greg have been tremendous advocates for WPSQ and the Brisbane Branch, and have supported the Branch over many years.

A new committee was elected in April 2021: President Sue Ogilvie, Vice President Ginny Barbour, Treasurer Mark Turnbull and Secretary Tori Darnell. At our first meeting, we decided to run a survey of our members and agreed that given the ongoing COVID-19 situation, we would plan to have events outside for the time being.



The new committee: Tori Darnell, Mark Turnbull, Ginny Barbour, Sue Ogilvie.



Alan Don and a group of attendees at the Mt Coot-tha walk.

In July 2021, we had the first of our events – a well-attended walk in Mt Coot-tha Botanic Gardens, led by Alan and Jill Don, which was followed by refreshments.

For our September AGM on September 25, we are planning a nature walk at Oxley Creek Common, followed by breakfast and the AGM.

Fundraising continues through the online subscription to Entertainment books that Leanne has set up. The Branch remains healthy financially. We maintained our Facebook presence and activity throughout the year and regularly receive enquiries through that. We have almost 3500 followers on the page now.

In the coming year, we plan to run more outdoors events, including teaming up with local Bushcare groups. We are looking forward to engaging with our members through events over the next year.



Leanne Bowden and Greg Miller after the Mt Coot-tha walk.



Jill and Alan Don with Sue Ogilvie after the Mt Coot-tha walk.

CAPRICORN BRANCH

John McCabe, President

Participation in a number of events continues with members contributing to small groups of two to five persons continuing with a range of environmental initiatives.

We have set up pop-up stalls for a few days in a row, in the large shopping centre to educate about recycling. Firstly, for National Recycling week in October 2020 and again for Clean Up Australia Day March 2021. Members took the opportunity to educate people on how and what to recycle, local waste initiatives, the QLD single-use plastics bans, and all wildlife and waste issues. We won the support of the Livingstone Shire Mayor in the form of payment of our shop rental fees.

Capricorn Branch provided some advocacy and direct support for the protection of beaches and education on avoidance of impacts on nesting turtles and on emergent flatback turtle hatchlings, which are only easily diverted from the relatively safety of ocean water by artificial lighting. Informal interpretation of turtle activity was provided to beach visitors, resulting in support for marine turtle conservation.

Members have been continuing the beach weeding and replanting restoration activities along Capricorn Coast beaches, including being part of a working group focussed on research and action planning about the specific weed now becoming well-established on many of the coastal dunes and urban creeklines, *barleria repens*.

A number of Branch members are participating in a variety of community reference groups being run by the Livingstone Shire Council and are speaking up for wildlife.

Members are working with the Capricorn Conservation Council on a platypus watch initiative.

Members continue to carry out the on-ground work of rehabilitation of ten hectare SEVT species planted on former mined land now within the Mount Etna Caves National Park.

As one of the trustees of the Duckponds Environmental reserve at Port Curtis on the outskirts of Rockhampton, the Capricorn Branch continues to do on-ground work controlling weeds such as *hymenachne* and fixing fences. We also spent time involved in continuing discussions with our fellow Local Government and State Department trustees, advocating for improved management of the reserve.

Branch members were excited to receive reports of a live northern quoll sighting at a house near the Duckpond reserve, and another near Emu Park. Three weeks later, another northern quoll was found dead beside the road at Bouldercombe near Rockhampton. Perhaps northern quolls are making a comeback – we are glad for a glimmer of hope.



Duckpond Environmental Reserve

CASSOWARY COAST–HINCHINBROOK BRANCH

Daryl Dickson, President

THREATENED SPECIES

The NQ Threatened Species Symposium was held in Cairns in February. We reported for the National Mahogany Glider Recovery Team and formed good networks with other groups. Our Branch continues to be actively represented on the National Mahogany Glider Recovery Team with Suzie Smith as chairperson and team members, Judy Murphy and Daryl Dickson.

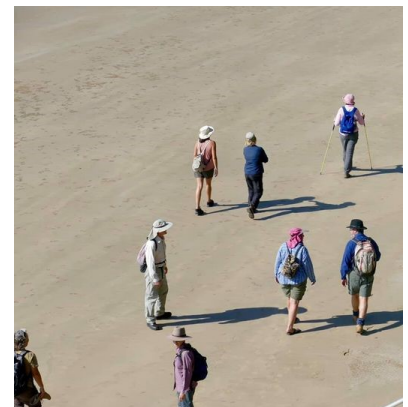


Threatened Species Symposium

Working with the Cassowary Coast Regional Council, we supply glider trees to property owners whose resident gliders are experiencing difficulty moving to feed or disperse young. There have been several barbed wire casualties recently and we continue to push for glide poles at Lily Creek road and other pinch points.

WALKING ON THE WILDSIDE

Our walking program was able to continue despite COVID-19 with correct social distancing and record keeping. We walked Dalrymple Gap (Aug 2020) and Elizabeth Grant Falls (Sept 2020). We joined the Tangaroa Blue Team on a beach clean-up of Ramsay Bay, Hinchinbrook Island (Oct 2020). It was thought that a December walk 2020 would be too hot and likely wet, so we opted for a Christmas party at Daryl and Geoff's as well as our AGM 2020/21.



Kennedy Bay walk

In May 2021, we did our annual walk into Kennedy Bay again, this time with members of the Townsville Branch. As a special celebration, we all met up on Saturday afternoon at Bingil Bay at 5.00pm for a pre-dinner tour of the Wildlife Queensland historic precinct there, relating to the first campaigns to save the reef and the rainforest in the 60s and 70s. This was followed by a very enjoyable dinner at Bingil Bay Cafe. In June 2021, we were again joined by Townsville members in a relaxed walk around the Tyto Wetlands, Ingham.

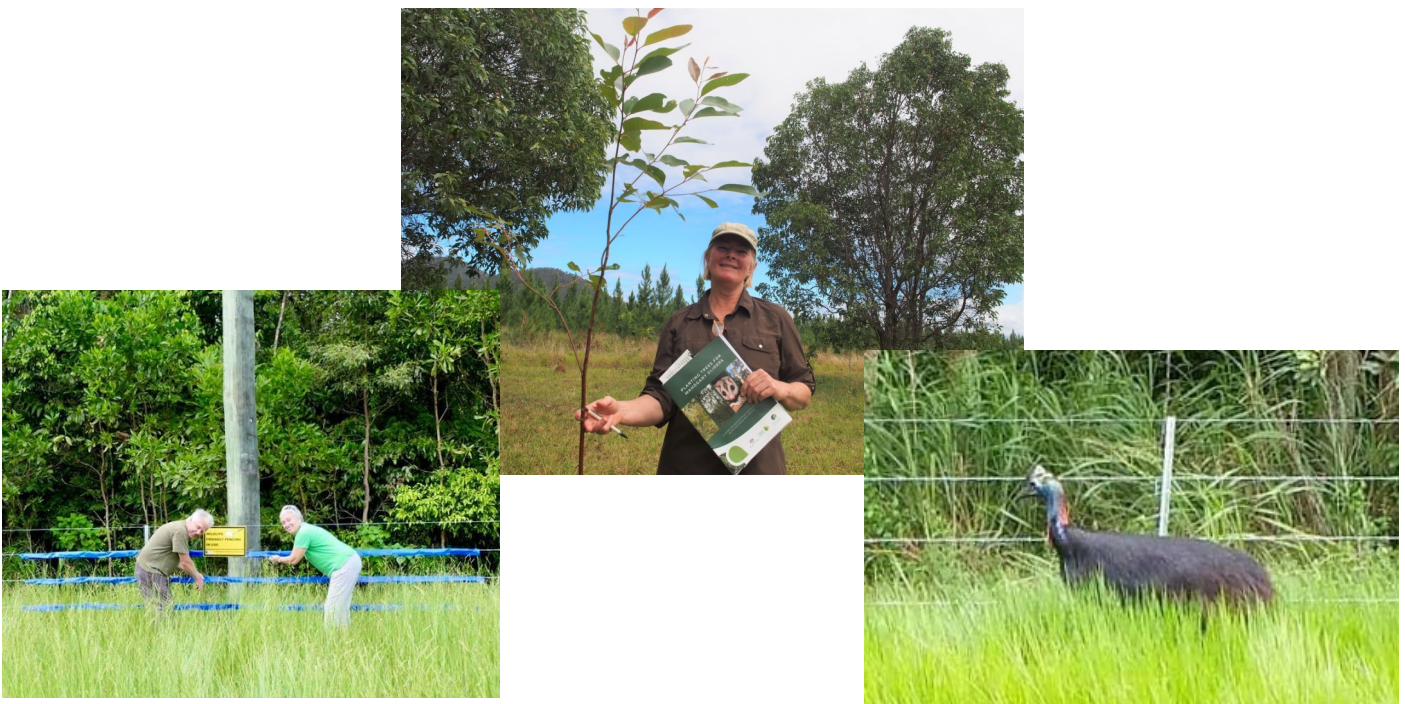


OTHER WORKS AND ACTIVITIES

We are involved in many events and projects throughout the year, sometimes as individual members representing our Branch and sometimes as a group, but it all amounts to a significant list when we tally it up for these reports. Here is a summary of what we have all been doing:

- Branch members have been assisting a JCU PHD student, Eryn Changm, who is working with a team of volunteers on mahogany glider genetics. We did a “meet and greet” with the team in Sept and Nov 2020, and provided follow up and assistance in supplying genetic samples from injured gliders (collected by Mungarru Lodge Sanctuary), providing QM contacts to access stored samples to assist the research
- Daryl was one of the presenters in Wildlife Qld Gliders in the Spotlight Webinar July/Aug 2020
- Participated and coordinated the annual Pied Imperial Pigeon count 2020
- Our Branch members have attended tree planting events for Murray Valley Landholders in mahogany glider and cassowary habitat
- We continue our engagement at local schools – September 2020, we gave a talk at Cardwell State School about long-term effects and recovery for wildlife after cyclones. We continue contact throughout the year with Kennedy State School – we had a lovely invitation to see their new wildlife mural
- We continue to provide monitoring and data management of remote camera monitoring of the Kennedy Glider Pole crossing
- Ongoing works to cap barbed wire where mahogany gliders have been injured or killed
- We continue to maintain a Branch Facebook page @wildlifeqldcassowarycoasthinchinbrook.Community and a Facebook page for the mahogany glider @Mungarru.Community

We look forward to active participation in the annual Torres Strait Pigeon Counts later in the year, support of the Cassowary Festival in September, and post COVID-19 capacity to host events at Ninney Rise.



FAR NORTH QUEENSLAND BRANCH

Dr Andrew Dennis, President

Members of the Branch are spread over Cairns, Gordonvale and the Atherton Tablelands, and are all very busy people. Because of this and concerns about COVID-19, we meet via zoom. We are planning some fieldwork in Tumoulin forest reserve when the weather dries up. We find working on submissions, modifying documents as we go in zoom, useful compared to individual members preparing submissions and emailing them to others. One example was the questionnaire associated with the review of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act).

The Branch is concerned about the integrity of National Parks in the Einasleigh Uplands Bioregion. There are various threats to these parks. We will start with park boundaries at Blackbraes and Forty Mile Scrub. The official boundaries in some places extend into the neighbour's land and in some places the accepted boundary extends into the parks. Development, including a proposal to grow dry land cotton, is occurring near these parks and we need to be diligent in keeping an eye on these developments.

The Branch is monitoring various proposed developments on national parks in our region, some like the Wangetti Trail of national significance and have made submissions where appropriate. The Branch has made submissions on matters of more general nature e.g. regarding the effect of proposed windfarms on wildlife.



Wangetti trail (DTIS.qld.gov.au)



Einasleigh River (aroundaustraliabycaravan.blogspot.com)

FRASER COAST BRANCH

Vanessa Elwell-Gavins, President

Fraser Coast Branch managed to have a successful year, unmarred by the lockdowns and restrictions experienced by so many elsewhere in Queensland and interstate. Our membership base has oscillated, but overall has remained comparatively stable. We had already moved to bi-monthly general meetings and have now experimented successfully with out-of-session decision-making.

We started the financial year, post the initial 2020 COVID-19 lockdown, with a social bang on a golden July afternoon: afternoon tea outdoors at Arkarra Tea Gardens with an optional walk around the lovely melaleuca wetlands at Arkarra Lagoons. Arkarra was reserved by Council about 20 years ago, in part because of the lobbying efforts of our Branch. It's a rewarding site for bird-watching, frogging and spot-lighting.

Our signature activity, the *nature walks program*, restarted in August 2020 and has continued to be a wonderful source of energy and information as we explore our local environment. Destinations were varied and unfailingly interesting. The walks program has been our biggest recruiter of new members.

Two members ran an outstanding 'mangroves walk' as part of Council's 'World Wetlands Day Month' celebrations. This attracted over 50 people, so a repeat was hastily organised.

We continued our quarterly *Backyard Bioblitzes*, instigated in May 2020 whilst in lockdown, and they have maintained a core of dedicated participants. As this program relies on participants' ability to use a camera and upload images (and/or recordings) onto the iNaturalist website, we offered an introductory workshop at the end of April, delivered by the organising committee, to help folk gain the necessary skills.

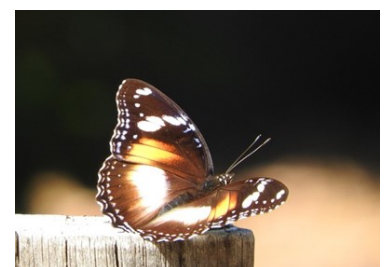
With limitations on numbers allowed indoors, our perennially popular *Library talks* program did not resume until May 2021, when it hit the ground running in both Hervey Bay Library and Maryborough Library. Our *Schools* program has continued, but was affected by the inability of our schools to accept visitors until recently.

The most important feature of our work this year has revolved around participating in consultations for several important 'planning' projects: *review of Council's 2014 Planning Scheme, Coastal Futures Project* and review of the *Wide Bay Burnett Regional Plan*. These all involved meetings and submission writing. The Branch was represented on Council's Environment Advisory Group, and at consultations on the Tiaro Bypass and the windfarm proposed for the pine plantations between Maryborough and Gympie.

There was a long round of letters too, mainly to Fraser Coast Regional Council, addressing poor and declining water quality in urban wetlands, appalling management of a large resident kangaroo population when land was cleared for development in Point Vernon, removal of foreshore native vegetation by local residents to enhance their water views, an off-leash dog park in a sensitive area, etc.



Peter Duck leading the highly successful mangrove walk at the mouth of Eli Creek in February



The Varied Eggfly butterfly (*Hypolimnys bolina*)

Made possible by a generous bequest that the Branch received in 2020, the Branch has modified its partnership with the University of the Sunshine Coast, and will now sponsor two students of Wildlife Ecology to conduct their Honours projects in 2022, one on eastern grey kangaroos in urbanising environments, and one on greater gliders in our region. Branch discussions and the decision to do this, project scoping and legwork occurred in 2020-21. One project is now under contract.

Thanks to the initiative and energy of our Vice President, we have successfully raised funds through a regular raffle at a local hotel. We also ran a 'Bunnings sausage sizzle' in December, another useful fundraiser and 'member engagement' tool.

Communications continue to be important. Our quarterly journal, *Wambaliman*, is much appreciated and well supported with contributions. Our *Wildlife Matters* columns have become a feature each month in the region's free newspapers. These have proliferated since the closure of the regional NewsCorp papers during 2020.

As for the future, there is a clear ongoing need for the Branch to try and keep all levels of government, particularly our Council, honest when it comes to development, which is proceeding apace across Fraser Coast, particularly in the coastal zone. A key problem is not the quality of the planning scheme or Council policies and local laws per se, but a failure to implement them or to apply any penalties to developers and residents who flout them.

Our program is likely to remain relatively unchanged during 2021–22. Our activities depend on the availability and willingness of members to plan and run them, and our active membership is ageing. We are fortunate to be in a sound financial position at the moment, so a priority is to make sure we spend some funds in a way which directly benefits some of our iconic wildlife, or helps us collectively better understand where they are and how to protect them. We hope to expend some funds to assist our koala population, currently in tragically dire straits.

Like many Branches, we are challenged by succession planning. Our Executive will look different after our September 2021 AGM. I am standing down, after five years as Secretary, and three years as President, during which I also had to continue some Secretarial functions. Our Secretary, sadly, is also unable to stand again. These are critical and potentially difficult shoes to fill. While we may have some excellent people willing to become Executive members, it is not yet clear who will fill key positions. Some creativity and role-sharing may be required, with arrangements that may not conform to 'normal' expectations. At this stage, my crystal ball for ongoing Branch administration is...murky. However, I remain hopeful Fraser Coast Branch may continue to be viable as an incorporated association.



Fraser Coast Branch Executive 2020–2021: John Williams, Bruce Dick, Vanessa Elwell-Gavins and

GOLD COAST and HINTERLAND BRANCH

Sally Spain, President

Partnerships and Participation

- Wildlife Queensland, Gold Coast and Hinterland Branch, has delegates at the fortnightly meetings of the Gold Coast Environment Council (GECKO) and supports and shares submissions and campaigns.
- We have ongoing representation at the forum sponsored by the Minister for Environment, regarding the future of the Nerang National Park and the issue of mountain bike access.
- Attendance at workdays and strategy meetings with the Friends of the Nerang National Park.
- WQ, GC & H is supportive of the Springbrook Wildlife Appreciation Group, initiated and managed by one of our members.
- The extensive and effective Coomera Conservation Group is a WQ, GC & H sub Committee.
- Our Association is a member of Save our Spit and works in conjunction with them.
- WQ, GC & H is active in the cause of the local residents working towards finalisation, not extension for a century, of the lease on the quarry at Oxenford and are particularly concerned about the potential loss of previous buffers and the impact on adjacent habitat and the effect on water table and Coomera River.
- Bats south-east Queensland, lobbying, educating and engaged in rescue, care and release, is one of our sub committees.
- We are a member of the Community Alliance, in which a number of local groups campaign for better Town Planning and this GCC Alliance is also part of a larger SEQ organisation.
- A vigilant watch is kept on the large viable remainder of Black Swan Lake, Bundall.
- Our Urban Wildlife sub-committee has obtained a grant for an Urban Wildlife website, free native tree give-away program, marquee and educational posters for outreach.
- Two members are directors of the Wildlife Land Fund.
- We have representation at the *Gold Coast Climate Action Network*.



Koala @ D Payne

Looking back at the Year that Was June 2021 to June 2020

- Email to members and approx 400 other supporters re lobby councillors with regard to Oxenford quarry, plus 3000 fliers delivered
- Correspondence re operational works at Black Swan Lake.
- Legal advice given habitat loss at Tweed Heads.
- Attendance at Wildlife Queensland State, Protected Areas Matter Forum.
- Lobbying of Councillors and attendance at Council Committee re proposal for new study re cable car to Springbrook.
- Meeting with Minister for Environment re Nerang National Park
- Legal advice given re helicopter flights over Broadwater.
- Representation at Stakeholders Forums re Nerang National Park.
- Liaison with Redlands Branch on issue of loss of koala habitat.
- WQ GC & H Christmas Gathering for supporters and friends,
- Funds given for Springbrook Protection and for Nerang Community House, in which we meet.
- Annual General Meeting with Guest Speaker Dr Ally Sammel, a lecturer in Education who has developed syllabi, from Prep to Year 12, which integrates information on the key role of bats in the sustainability of our ecosystems.
- Attendance at the GECKO National Parks and Eco-Tourism Forum.
- Contact to all Councillors re opposition to helitours at Philip Park and adjacent beach at Spit.
- Attendance at World Premiere of Lyn Sutherland documentary Pulse of Life.
- Numerous letters to the Newspaper-some published.
- Stirling work from sub committees, re koala rescue and campaigning for desperately needed habitat and care of bats and lobbying for their protection

Grateful thanks to Legal Advisor David Spain, Vice President Sharon Quinlan, Secretary Ann Jurrjens, Communications Officer Rowena Biby, Treasurer Nicolle Archer, Assistant Treasurer Caroline Satori Wildlife Advisor Nancy Sutherland, Koala Care, Karina Waterman

Black Swan Lake, Bundall, Gold Coast.
Image: Amanda Little



KEDRON BROOK CATCHMENT BRANCH

Robert Standish-White, President

Many of us were hopeful that the strange and disruptive times of COVID-19 might make us more cognisant of what matters, and look for some new ways and policies “on the other side”. Those pictures of dolphins frolicking in suddenly clean waters or the long lost views of the Himalayas were really inspiring at the time, but sadly do not seem to have made any lasting impression on our policy makers. Even the disastrous bushfire season has not shifted focus off fossil fuel recovery and inordinately large infrastructure projects. Well, Kedron Brook cannot be accused of any of the latter, though the upper catchment continues to be urbanised at a frightening rate.

Early in July, we went on a scouting walk near Shand Street off the reach of the Brook nearest to Australian Laboratory Services, who had expressed interest in doing something near there. This proved that the area is in fact too rigorous for amateur improvements. Encouraged by our Creek Catchment Officer, Anna Bourke, we advertised for a Secretary and Project Officer in August and were delighted to get responses from an array of capable applicants. We took on Thomas Gavinson and Gracie Skelton in those roles, but sadly Thomas had to leave for personal reasons shortly after, and Gracie got work in Tasmania in March 2021. We welcomed Jen Hocking as our new secretary.

Amongst the many pandemic delays were AGMs, ours in 2020 being held some months late in September. We have continued to have some committee meetings over zoom. Most of us are still working so time is precious.



We have worked in parallel with a new community group who wish to take better care of Ferguson Park in Enoggera. They are being supported by Healthy Waterways and, as far as possible, Brisbane City Council. We undertook a familiarisation walk and later a planting day, at which the inimitable Martin Fingland of Geckoes Wildlife explained how such actions can assist many species using our waterways.

We caught up with some water testing up the length of the Brook in February and found, not unexpectedly, that quality improved further upstream. Jen represented us at the Lord Mayor’s Round Table in March, where combined community groups pushed for an improved Brisbane City environmental policy. Shortly after, we joined the Clean Up Australia Day campaign at a site behind Stafford Shopping Town. It was pleasing to see the trend noted last year continuing, with noticeably fewer cans and bottles, thanks to the container deposit scheme.

At the end of March, we undertook a fish snapshot at our Arana Hills site, still in pretty fair shape, also a fairly familiar catch profile of many ferals and a few indigenous including a little eel, catfish and some gudgeon. Despite best intentions, random rain events have pushed up levels in the creek several times subsequently, so the next one may have to wait for warmer weather.



The highlight of our year again was the Student Catchment Immersion Program (SCIP) day in April, held this year at sites around the Mitchelton Community Garden site. We got a group of keen students involved in a fish snapshot, spreading a large pile of mulch on recent planting, then weed clearing and planting on a big slope adjacent Osborne Road. They were fed and put their minds to a local planning problem. We all learned from each other.

Ongoing activities include the bird walks still run by Jenny and Charles Ivin, whose meticulous records should prove a boon for any researchers. Ann and Lyn Ellerman care for the 'Powerlink Site' at Wahminda Grove, and the various bushcare groups linked on our website beaver away at varying rates.



LOGAN BRANCH

Ted Fensom, President

No report had been received at the time of compilation of this document

SCENIC RIM BRANCH

Ronda Green, President

At our AGM on 20 November 2021, the following committee members were elected:

Ronda Green, Chair	Darren Green, Treasurer
Sandra Rose, Secretary	Robin Rowland

We had been forced by COVID-19 lockdown into a late start with corridor planting funded by the federal (Community Environment Program) grant but had made good progress in the spring of 2020, and now we are about to suspend further planting activities over the heat of summer. I had hoped for more volunteers to conduct fauna surveys along the corridor route, as it is important we establish some baseline information if we are to monitor success or otherwise of our corridors in future years, for our own benefit and to advise conservationists in other regions. Unfortunately, this didn't happen. As usual, we found that people are willing to join surveys we lead but not sufficiently confident to lead them themselves, and sadly we simply do not have the time available to lead all the surveys that are needed for valid comparison.

We held a workshop in February in the Council building in Beaudesert (this time with social distancing and gloved volunteers serving tea, coffee, orange juice and biscuits). We explained our progress and what remained to be done, especially between then and June, when our acquittal form needed to be submitted. Louise Mackey of Bush Buddies brought along a squirrel glider, spotted python, bearded dragon and glossy black cockatoo to remind everyone of the reasons we're doing all this. Darren carried the python around the room for delegates to meet, while Louise carried (separately!) the glider and the dragon. The cockatoo needed no assistance – he flew onto Sandy's (our secretary) shoulder, then landed rather fittingly on Ian Beale's table (Ian has been planting *Allocasuarina torulosa* for glossies), scattering a few papers. Despite COVID-19, the workshop was well attended, and we've since planted on the properties of some of the attendees. Doug Prior, leading the nest box building project, also attended and has since built and supervised the building of a total of 50 squirrel glider nest boxes. Some of these still await distribution to landowners.

Also in February 2021, we held another display at the Beaudesert Markets in the hope of encouraging more landowners to join in with the corridors project. We made the FREE TREES sign prominent again as otherwise we find that, as a conservation group, people tend to give us a wide berth in case we're asking for donations rather than having something to offer them. And as usual, it was mainly people who already had forested properties or had already started planting natives who responded, not the owners of cleared land where we really need at least a few trees to bridge the gaps in our corridor routes.

We attempted to get a meeting with relevant people in Council to discuss roadside planting to help fill some of these gaps. It seemed there was always at least one relevant person who was unavailable each week, so we still haven't managed this but will be trying again very soon. Two landowners with properties almost adjoining one another were very antagonistic towards each other. While one was very happy to plant a corridor reaching almost to his neighbour's property (despite his personal feelings towards that neighbour), the other said he wanted nothing to do with joining their corridors even when I pointed out it was to assist the wildlife, not the actual neighbour, whoever he might be.



Volunteers doing some habitat enhancement in one of our "hubs"

Still, we did end up with 20 properties on which we planted trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants (or in some cases, simply delivered the plants and the landowners took care of the planting themselves) until late May, then ceased activity because of the danger of frosts. We assisted with fence erection (to separate young plants from livestock) on one of the properties, and landowners erected fencing themselves on seven other properties we delivered the materials to. Many thanks to our volunteers, who were a wonderful help with planting, erecting tree-guards and watering the new plants. Robin Rowland (a committee member) wrote a nice two-page article for the Land for Wildlife journal, with photos of tree-planting, volunteers and committee, an explanation of why we are doing the corridors, progress to date and how others can be involved.

Dale Anderson had previously made me aware of Todd Lane, which if re-classified from road reserve to conservation area, would make an excellent addition to our corridors as it includes many mature trees with hollows and stretches about 3km along the route needed for connecting the habitats of Kooralbyn and Round Mountain with those of Birnam Range. Cameron Todd, one of the landowners we've supplied plants and fencing material to, is related to the Todd which the Lane was named after and is very supportive of its use as a corridor. Joe Hinchcliff, journalist for the Fassifern Guardian (with Headquarters in Boonah) contacted me as he was interested in doing a story on Todd Lane's potential as part of a corridor route. Dale, Darren and I met him at Todd Lane, and the story made the front page of the Fassifern Guardian and the entire 12th page.

We were very sad to learn of the death by cancer of John Long, "Uncle John", an elder originally from Round Mountain but more recently living in Kalbar. He had joined in with tree-planting and fauna surveys, told us Indigenous stories from the district and lamented the disappearance of species such as the sand goanna that used to be seen in the Scenic Rim, also the "rivers of fire," when the bottlebrush were far more prolific, giving a marvellous display of brilliant red when flowering along the creeks and rivers. He had also attended some of our workshops and spoke at one of them. We thank you and miss you Uncle John.

In February, Robin Villiers-Brown asked me to join her in speaking to a Beaudesert scout group about wildlife in the Scenic Rim. Because of the young age of some, I was asked to concentrate on personal stories about my experiences with wildlife species, which I did, and at Robin's suggestion presented the scout hall with a WPSQ glider poster.

In May, I presented a talk on Wildlife of the Scenic Rim to the Rural Women's Group in Boonah, which appeared to generate considerable interest. I also presented a talk to a Boonah Landcare meeting, on the different needs of different wildlife species concerning fire, and the local species that had lost a lot of habitat with the fires of 2019-2020.

We were notified that the Logan and Albert River Catchment Association (LARC) had received a grant to run a community led survey to gain more understanding of the koala population in the Logan Valley and how they move through the landscape, including the use of roadside vegetation and isolated trees in paddocks. Over the next two years, the local community will help by reporting koala sightings in the region via a mobile app (Inaturalist), Facebook or text. Ryan Laurie of University of Queensland is leading the project, assisted by Dale Anderson. I was invited to talk about our corridors at the inaugural workshop in Beaudesert, and Scenic Rim WPSQ is acknowledged as one of the official supporters of the koala project.

A bushfire recovery app developed by Brendan Mackay and Andrew Wong is now in the beta-testing stage. I have entered two photos from the Lower Portals track, Mt Barney, which seem to be the first to be recorded in the Scenic Rim (most records so far are from VIC, ACT and southern NSW), and have asked our members to get in touch with Brendan and Andrew to also help test this version (and to have their information recorded in the central database). Wildlife photos can be taken, but the main emphasis is the vegetation recovery since the 2019-2020 fires.

We have recently received a LandCare grant of almost \$40,000 to continue and expand our corridors project. Many thanks to Robin Rowland and Sue George, who put a lot of effort into the application while I was very occupied in preparing the acquittal form for the previous grant and writing a journal article, all of which had the same deadline. The committee met recently to discuss our first steps in planning and implementation

We are pleased that one of our most active volunteers, Ian Beale, is standing for committee this year.

SUNSHINE COAST & HINTERLAND BRANCH

Jude Crighton, President

Continuing restrictions on public gatherings public gatherings have constrained some of our activities again this year, but unfortunately the threats to local habitat and wildlife continue. We were able to hold our monthly meetings in lovely conditions in the outdoor 'amphitheatre' of Ben Bennett Park in July and August, but with spring came the mosquitos and less reliable weather, so since September we have been grateful to the Power Boat Club at Golden Beach for offering us the use of a meeting room. Although online meetings are possible and sometimes necessary, we still enjoy meeting with our members in person, albeit at an appropriate distance.

There was a sad start to 2021 with the loss of Judy Nelson-Gracie in February. Judy was a founding and lifelong member of the Caloundra Branch of WSPQ, assisting her sister Kathleen McArthur in the work of the Branch as office-bearer, plant propagator and wildflower walk guide, and more recently as a generous donor. A well-attended memorial event was organised by her family at Caloundra's CCSA Hall on 6 March 2021, when memories of her kindness, resilience and humour were shared.



Judy Nelson-Gracie leading the battle to save Shelly Beach in 1980

Our AGM was delayed until March due to our participation in the Pumicestone Passage Convergence in February. WSPQ presented a brief history of environmental advocacy by community groups, including some pithy comments by our own Kathleen McArthur and Jill Chamberlain. We also prepared a timeline of these groups, campaigns, government legislation, development proposals and cooperation, which was also displayed as an illustrated wall-mounted version. Paul Smith's presentation on Faunawatch wildlife surveys on the Aura site was well received, as was Jill Chamberlain's summary of 28 years of Shorebird monitoring in Pumicestone Passage and its catchment. At the AGM, John Roberts stood down as President due to a recurring back injury, (although he continues as a committee member) and the meeting persuaded Anne Wensley to take on the role, with her long experience in environmental and social issues and recognition as a local historian. Other positions were filled by the incumbents, with Suzanne Aspland replacing a retiring Jill Chamberlain as the second Vice President. Jill kindly continues her sterling work as responder to submissions to Council.

Events, and with them, fundraising opportunities, were again severely restricted. The **Maleny Wood Expo** was cancelled for the second year, and **World Environment Day** was celebrated as a 'devolved' event. In November, we had inaugurated a **Shelly Beach Wildlife** information to mark the beginning of the Loggerhead turtle nesting season and we repeated this as part of the WED program, and also contributed to a plant ID walk with the Currimundi Catchment Care Group in an area regenerated by ten years of National Tree Day plantings. Unfortunately, a Mangrove ID walk we had prepared for the Pumicestone Passage foreshore was cancelled due to forecasted heavy rain, but we hope to hold this at another time. However, we were happy when the **Wildflower Festival** could proceed and held walks with small groups in Ben Bennett Bushland Park, Isabel Jordan Bushland Reserve, and Kathleen McArthur Conservation Park. Thanks to all members who helped, particularly Sue Aspland and Jenny Gursanscky.



Shelly Beach Dune Vegetation

Our concerns about threats to nesting habitat for the critically endangered loggerhead turtles of Shelly Beach continue. In November 2020, at the start of the current nesting season, we welcomed the installation of low fencing and vegetation at the beach end of William Street to prevent light spill from parked cars and coastal pathway cyclists that affects incoming nesting turtles. After strident protests to the new councillor from the same small group of residents who have been pushing for 'vegetation management' (removal), citing lack of consultation and 'loss of amenity', the shade cloth on the fence was removed, rendering it useless. We wrote a letter of protest to the new CEO and organised a meeting with her for concerned turtle care and dune care volunteers, and further meetings with councillors. A further study of 'community values' for Shelly and Moffat Beaches has been commenced and WPSQ, along with the Bushcare groups we participate in, has been consulted as a stakeholder group. Member Jackie Steele has been indefatigable on this issue, and we continue to liaise with concerned residents. Wilful damage to the dunal vegetation has been ongoing.

Ben Bennett Bushland Park, Caloundra

The proposed road through the southern sector of the Park received a promise of state funding in the run-up to the State election in October 2020, and federal funding was announced earlier this year. Our Branch of WPSQ co-signed a letter with the Caloundra Residents Association to the Department of Transport and Main Roads asking for that planning to ensure that damage to the delicate ecosystems of the Park be minimised during construction, and were assured that we would be consulted. The Facebook page for the Friends of Ben Bennett set up by member, Jenny Gursanscky, continues to feature the beauty and variety of flora and fauna in the Park and to raise public awareness. We are supporting alternative, less disruptive plans proposed by local residents' groups and have met with the new state member for Caloundra, Jason Hunt, and council planners, but Sunshine Coast Council is currently determined to proceed with their outsize plans.

Isabel Jordan Bushland Reserve

Also prior to the October 2020 QLD election, with considerable publicity, the Caloundra Air Museum petitioned State parliament to advance their plans to expand into Isabel Jordan Bushland Reserve, named in honour of a past president of our Branch. We set up a counter petition to protect the Reserve, which gained over 1800 signatures in a short period, and met with candidates and the press. Thanks to Helen Kershaw for all of her hard work in this regard. We have since had a meeting with the Division One councillor, facilitated by Phil Smith of the Community Strategy Leadership Group. A new Caloundra Aerodrome Master Plan is being prepared, and we have been assured that we have been identified as a specific interest group that will be engaged with during the community consultation process that will occur in the coming months. We have also made a presentation to the Community and Aviation Forum on the matter and will also have input into the new Caloundra Aerodrome Master Plan.

In other matters, we were successful in applying for a Sunshine Coast Council Cultural Heritage grant to publish a book by long-term member, Elaine Green, to be entitled "Sunshine Coast: Conservation and Development 1060-2020". Editing (by Helen Kershaw) and design continues, and it should be ready to be launched in November 2021. We have also been invited by Caloundra Regional Gallery to sponsor a Student Wildlife Art Prize, to be held in 2022.

Faunawatch

Faunawatch, WPSQ's major project, received interim funding from Sunshine Coast Council's Community Partnerships Program in 2020-2021 to continue surveys on Land for Wildlife properties and has applied for a further three years of funding from July 2021. Funding from Healthy Land and Water for surveys at Aura also continues. The retirement of reptile expert, Tony Bright, this year has been more than compensated for by the recruitment of Dr Scott Burnett.

Faunawatch public walks are led by Paul Smith on the second Wednesday of the month at Maroochy Regional Bushland Botanic Gardens and on the fourth Monday of the month at various natural locations have been held when COVID-19 restrictions allow.



TOOWOOMBA BRANCH

No report had been received at the time of compilation of this document.

TOWNSVILLE BRANCH

Liz Downes, Vice President

Membership: We were pleased to see the reverse of last year's negative trend as we gained 11 new members, some of whom have become regular participants on our walks and have contributed in other ways. On a sadder note, in June, we were sorry to learn that one of our two Honorary Life members, Dr George Heinsohn, had suffered a stroke at his home in Canberra. George led the Branch for nearly 40 years, and our good wishes and those of his many friends in the north have been passed on to him through his family, who are keeping us updated on his condition and plans for his ongoing care.

Community 1. Walks and outings: Despite the extraordinary circumstances of the last 18 months, we in the 'lucky north', managed to run our full program of walks. Looking back, it is interesting to note that, here in the dry tropics, seven of our ten trip destinations featured creeks or wetlands. We explored new places and revisited old favourites, attracting an average attendance of 13. Our most popular was a weekend trip to join members of our sister Branch (Cassowary Coast & Hinchinbrook) to walk the historic Edmund Kennedy track, which runs south from Mission Beach to Kennedy Bay. This was one of two joint Branch walks – something we should try to continue when we can.



Branch members on top of a Magnetic Island headland. Photo Ishara Udawela.

Community 2. "Our Townsville" Expo: Townsville's traditional EcoFiesta fell victim to COVID-19 restrictions last year but returned as part of a much bigger event in June 2021, featuring many other aspects of community life and interests. Our stall had a good location, complete with our own wildlife specimen in the form of an obliging brushtail possum in a nearby tree! Our display showcased mahogany gliders and the two locally seen flying-fox species, with lots of giveaways, wildlife quizzes for adults and kids, and our own QR code which took people direct to our website.

Mahogany Glider survey: In mid-2020, the easing of both COVID-19 restrictions and boggy conditions, allowed us to resume our camera surveys, while an extension to our project period allowed a few more trips to be made before the year's end. Nonetheless, it was with considerable satisfaction that, after three years of journeying 70km up the Bruce highway, and lugging ladders, cameras and other equipment over rough terrain, not to mention the many hours spent by our President scrolling through images for those "ah-ha" glider moments, we finally brought the project to a close. Our secretary burned the midnight oil to compile our final report and we were gratified to receive an appreciative letter from DES commending its comprehensive nature, and our attention to detail throughout the project.



Mahogany glider on a fire-scarred *M. viridiflora*, Mutarnee (n. of Townsville). Photo WQ Townsville

With 81 glider images (photos and short videos) from 34 locations across approximately 1,890 ha, we conclusively established the presence of this rare and endangered mammal on the project site. Whether our warnings to DES about the degradation of habitat now occurring on this land (observed firsthand) as a result of its present use, will be heeded or whether any of our recommendations will be implemented is an ongoing worry. But having honed our skills on this project and in cooperation with Terrain NRM and DNRM&E, we are now placing cameras on an area of State land on the opposite side of the highway.

Other **local issues and concerns** through the year were:

1. Flying-fox management: Our persistence paid off when we finally received a detailed response to questions raised about Park dispersals, as well as an offer to discuss our concerns in person and the opportunity to have input into Council's interpretive material. Meetings with Council staff were held in September and January and, while two specific concerns remain, our discussions have been cordial and it is good to have restored the dialogue which had previously broken down.

2. Closure of NP campground: For at least 50 years, a family-friendly campground has existed in a natural bush setting on the banks of Alligator Creek, in the Cape Bowling Green NP, within 30 minutes' drive of Townsville. For many children, this is where they first experienced camping in nature, maybe going on to develop a love and respect for both nature and National Parks. We were therefore shocked to learn that 're-development' of the day-use area meant abolition of the campsite. With no community consultation and works well under way by the time we learned of the plans, we were fighting a losing battle to bring about any change of heart. While we accept use may be declining, surely a smaller campground could have been retained so that those important and valuable nature experiences remain available?

3. Anzac Park trees: We joined other residents in deploring the decision to remove two beautiful shade trees (*Ficus benjamina*) from the heritage listed Anzac Park – carried out with two days' notice and no community consultation. We supported the call for a register to identify the city's special trees and the introduction of bylaws to protect them.

4. Claude's block: We were excited to learn of efforts by the Magnetic Island Nature Care Association (MINCA) to acquire a significant and biodiverse area of koala habitat on the island's west coast. Despite the short timeframe, it was thrilling to see the ambitious target of \$400,000 raised in just a few weeks. Our Branch contributed \$1000, with individual members also donating. We look forward to a celebratory visit when all aspects of the purchase are finalised. The land will now be managed by MINCA for nature conservation.

5. No horses for these courses: The demise of a proposal to create a huge equestrian resort on undisturbed bushland behind Toolakea Beach, about 30km north of Townsville, was greeted with relief. In 2019, we had joined NQCC in making a submission on the project's EIS but in April this year, we were advised by the State Government that, the proponents having failed to take the necessary steps to advance the project, it had now lapsed. Whether this hiatus is temporary or permanent remains to be seen, but while the land remains in the hands of this overseas company, we cannot be confident of its safety.

Submissions: Three submissions were made during the year: on the Draft Mahogany Glider Recovery Plan, on the Animal Care and Protection Act Review, and on the Katter Party bill to reverse conservation measures for the Reef.

Awards: Our Vice President was honoured to receive the 2020 Margaret Thorsborne Award from the Society – and what an attractive award it is, depicting a smiling Margaret against a background of coastal vegetation. Three months later, she was even more astonished (and humbled) to receive the "Volunteer of the Year" award from the State body, Volunteering Queensland. We encourage other Branches to nominate members for community awards and ensure conservation volunteering is more widely recognised.

As always, we thank WPSQ Councillors and head office staff for support and advice in 2020-2021, and an especial nod to Amanda, who managed to "unlock" our access to MailChimp, finally allowing us to view our blog subscribers and edit our notifications.

Stay safe and stay well, everyone.

UPPER DAWSON BRANCH

Ann Hobson, Secretary

Upper Dawson has been challenged in 2020-21. With the passing of Project Officer, Adam Clark, the relocation of our outings planner, Melanie Simmons, and the impact of COVID, some of us have taken on more roles, learned more skills, and sought help from further afield. Two new members and three reinstated have been welcome.

The opening of the Bird Hide in Theodore was a major achievement thanks to the persistence of Loraine Hellyer, Melanie Simmons and Anne Chater, who also helped to win funding, in conjunction with the Theodore Chamber of Commerce, through the Fitzroy Basin Association to place wildlife signs and plant native bird-attracting shrubs and creepers around the Bird Hide and along the Castle Creek Walkway. This signage, information, plant and art project is due to be completed in October 2021.



Our annual Campout to Kilcowera beyond Thargomindah, was postponed from May to August to dodge COVID restrictions. Co-incidentally it followed excellent rain that enhanced the floral and bird life to be enjoyed along the roadsides en route and in the scrub and wetlands of the property. Members scattered throughout the south-east and their friends shared accounts of conservation work from their new locations.

Our October 2020 AGM venue had to be changed on the morning when a heavy downpour stopped access to our intended site, but the Moffat family welcomed us to their Eurombah home (and garden when the rain cleared.) Faithful members continue their efforts for the Branch and the environment, so we were able to fill the vacancies except for that of Project Officer. However, relocated member, Jo Wearing has made two submissions on our behalf in response to resource company projects.

The May weekend outing 2021 took us to Kookaburra Park in the Maleny district where our guide, Maryanne Law, showed us reclamation along the Mary River involving a serious revegetation project and guided us through rainforest walks and good bird watching in the Conondale National Park and Imbil State Forest. At the evening meeting, relocated member, Paul Stephenson, agreed to alert the Branch to resource projects that impinge on the Dawson Valley .



The PlatypusWatch eDNA Citizen Science Project had seemed a step too far for our depleted numbers, but insistence by Matt Cecil that there would be generous assistance from WPSQ's Platypus Watch persuaded us. The wonderful publicity by communications person at Head Office, Amanda Little, and masterful execution of the workshops and sampling by Tamielle Brunt saw a most successful weekend of citizen-science that has enhanced the Dawson's reputation as a place to spot the not-so-elusive monotremes, and will hopefully lead to renewed interest in protecting these iconic creatures from inappropriate and careless drowning in bait traps. Loraine and Helen's assistance in disseminating the publicity and guiding the scientists to sampling sites was key to maximising the benefit of the time spent by the scientists along the Dawson.

Branch plans for the future include

- the completion of the signage and art work on the Castle Creek Walkway,
- obtaining funding for a bird hide near Taroom,
- continuing to write monthly reports for local and state newsletters,
- responding to known threats to the wildlife and well being of the Dawson Valley,
- maintaining our quarterly meetings and annual camp outs
- supporting the Council in its advanced cat management strategy
- continuing to respond to infrastructure, water & extraction projects that impact on the land, its wildlife and its biodiversity
- encouraging every member to invite a new one to outings
- seeking help to set up bio-blitz quarterly to provide data to i.naturalist.

Thanks to every member who has worked and encouraged, and to Head Office for its leadership and support. Like our ever busy platypus, Upper Dawson keeps going.

