

FRIENDS OF STRADBROKE ISLAND



Established in 1988, FOSI is dedicated to the protection of the natural environment of North Stradbroke Island and its surrounding waters. FOSI also works to ensure that urban and economic development of the island is founded upon the principles of environmental protection and preservation of the unique urban characteristics of its townships.

MEMBERSHIP RATES, 2011: Individual \$15.00 Family \$20.00 Concession \$5.00

Friends of Stradbroke Island, PO Box 167, Point Lookout QLD 4183.

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SPOTTED ON THE BEACH: Willy Wagtail stands his ground!

Why is Stradbroke Island So Special

The remarkably diverse array of flora and fauna that thrived in South East Queensland 200 years ago is sadly fading to a shadow now with even the iconic Koala living on borrowed time. The Moreton Bay islands, particularly North Stradbroke, still retain much of that richness. Stradbroke's special environmental values need to be understood and appreciated by the wider community if the island is to be preserved in an authentic way.

Because islands by their very nature exist in varying degrees of isolation, species can develop apart.

Tim Flannery in his new book *On the Pacific, Among the Islands* observes: "On islands, evolution can be slowed down or speeded up. It can also take unlikely directions, fashioning novel creatures adapted to the particular conditions of the island."

This process is occurring on Stradbroke Island. For example, in the large mammals, the striking Golden

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Wallaby (Stradbroke Island colour phase of the Swamp Wallaby) and the genetically distinct Stradbroke Koala. In fact this Koala is the only naturally occurring island population in existence, other populations on Australian islands are introduced.



The island is an important natural refuge for wildlife.

The Queensland Museum's new edition of Wild Guide to Moreton Bay (reviewed in this edition) draws attention to the island's biodiversity.

"Wallum forest and scrub cover much of the island, but because North Stradbroke is larger than the other sand islands, the vegetation is

more diverse. Ti-trees, Scribbly Gums and other eucalypts, bloodwoods and casuarinas are common. North Stradbroke Island has the most diverse fauna of the Bay islands."

In fact the waters around the island demonstrate possibly even greater biodiversity.

To help preserve the natural value of the island, even as it suffers continuing damage from sand mining, development and other human impact, we all need to spell out its importance again and again whenever the opportunity arises.

Here are some important aspects worth repeating to spread the word.

- North Stradbroke is the second largest sand island in the world after Fraser.
- It has some features that Fraser does not eg the ocean side 18 mile swamp and the naturally occurring and genetically distinct koala.
- The ancient dunes have been estimated as up to 300,000 years old.
- A complex system of sand layers supports delicately posed vegetation communities, including beautiful wildflower heath.
- An enormous pure freshwater aquifer underpins a complex system of perched and window lakes and wetlands. Large areas of Stradbroke (not just 18 Mile Swamp) are listed under RAMSAR, the international wetland treaty, just like the French Camargue flamingo habitat, the Volga Delta in Russia and the Kerala Backwaters in India.
- Migratory birds depend on Stradbroke as a stop on their arduous navigation from the northern to Southern Hemisphere along the East Asian-Australian Flyway.
- The latest count of bird species reported on North Stradbroke is 362.

- Many species listed as endangered or vulnerable inhabit the Island.
- The variety of vegetation communities includes coastal dunes, tidal wetlands, freshwater wetlands, wildflower heathlands, eucalypt forests, rare coastal rainforests and rocky headlands.

North Stradbroke Island has been denigrated by some, in order to justify continued destructive sand mining. The reality is, that despite sand mining destroying some parts, the island overall is still a natural treasure, worthy of the highest level of protection ie National Park status, and the cessation of sand mining. ♦

Sue Ellen Carew

Some endangered and vulnerable species listed under Commonwealth Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (EPBC)

- Grey-headed Flying Fox - *Pteropus poliocephalis* V
- Water Mouse - *Xeromys myoides* V
- Wallum Sedge Frog - *Litoria olongburensis* V
- Swift Parrot - *Lathamus discolor* E
- Northern Giant Petrel - *Macronectes halli* V
- Oxleyan Pygmy Perch - *Namoperca oxleyana* E
- Long-nosed Potoroo - *Potorous tridactylus* V
- Regent Honeyeater - *Xanthomyza phrygia* E
- Yellow Swamp Orchid - *Phaius bernaysii* E
- Swamp Daisy - *Oleria hygrophila* E

Lively Rainbow Skink (*Carlia vivax*)

Spotted on New Year's Day on the shores of Eighteen Mile Swamp, this pretty little skink, about 9 centimetres long, lives within leaf litter along the Queensland coast. Two distinguishing features are its ability to make acrobatic leaps and the possession of five toes on the back legs compared with four on the front.

A band of reddish-orange around its middle indicates this is a male in breeding season. The colouring has an almost transparent quality,



especially on the reddish fore-legs which glow when the sunlight lights them from behind. The head colour appears to change subtly from bluish-grey to grey to greenish-grey, depending on the predominant tints and shades around it, though this may be nothing more than the effect of refracted light passing through its semi-transparent body. ♦

Julie Kearney

Jump for joy at this year's Chamber Music Festival

The annual Stradbroke Island Chamber Music Festival is being held over the winter weekend of 27 to 29 July this year. FOSI members are reminded that the festival was started 6 years ago by our late member and great music lover Jani Haenke and wonderful violinist Rachel Smith. Rachel continues as artistic director and performer and Fosi is a sponsor.

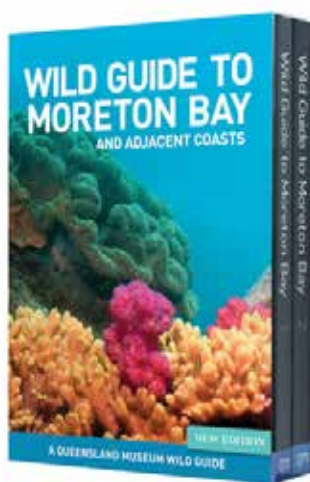
The great distinction of the festival is a celebration of music in the beautiful natural setting of Stradbroke Island. The whale-watching season will be reflected in a special piece of music to be performed this year. Vox Balaenae (voice of the whale) by George Crumb will be a highlight. Other musical experiences to look forward to include Jazz Trio Trichotomy and a brass quintet playing outdoors at the Little Ships Club on Sunday morning.

Tickets will be available at 4MBS or from Island outlets.

Members are also requested to consider providing accommodation for the musicians for the rehearsal week and the festival itself. If you are able to help please let a Fosi committee member know. The festival depends on local support to bring musicians of excellence to the Island. ♦



Book Review: A Wild Guide to Moreton Bay & Adjacent Coasts



If you have ever hankered to know to name of jellyfish washed up on the beach or more about the sand worms you catch for bait then this is the book for you.

The two-volume guide has magnificent photographs and detailed information about all of the wildlife of Moreton Bay from

birds to plants, fish, crustaceans, sponges and molluscs.

The listing for each animal or plant includes its common name, scientific name, features and notes on the species.

The book's introduction notes the amazing biodiversity of the Bay and its sand islands. The

authors write that there are *potentially hundreds more new species to be discovered right here in the shallow waters so close to Brisbane.*

These are most likely to be found in two rich 'bio-regions', one near the mouth of the river and the others in the lee of the large sand islands. In fact the highest species diversity is centered around the northern end of North Stradbroke Island and includes Myora, Peel, Bird and Goat Islands!

This is all the more reason to protect this beautiful island and its surrounding waters for the future.

I recommend this book to anyone with an interest in the natural world on our doorstep. And just imagine, next time you are walking along the beach and pick up a funny-looking piece of flotsam instead of saying "what on earth is this?" you can say "of course, some egg-cases of a Brown-band Catshark!" Priceless. ♦

Kate Campbell

Mauled Wallaby

This appalling photograph, taken by local Mike Hines who came upon this poor creature, is of a dying swamp wallaby found on the 4th April, at the Eastern end of Deadman's Beach.



This poor defenceless animal was mauled by an unsupervised dog or dogs. It had presumably been chased down from the Whale Watch track, attacked, had its pelvis and lower limb broken and then left to die.

Animal carer Carol Hahn and her neighbour Stella Grimmert sedated the poor thing and then carried it up off the beach to the police for euthanasia.

This is the direct result of extremely thoughtless, negligent people

who do not lock up their animals at night and allow them to roam freely during the night as well as during the day. ♦

Angela McLeod



BELOW: Brown Honeyeaters

Swamp Wallaby – *Wallabia bicolor*

Other names: Stinker; Golden Wallaby (for the Stradbroke Island colour phase)

Identification: Body length 75 cm; tail length 75 cm; weight 15 kg. Dark, thick-set wallaby. Back charcoal; belly orange; black 'robber's' mask; yellow face stripe; ears ginger at bases; black fore and hind feet; white tail tip.

Habitat and Range: Various habitats, including swamps, ferny gullies, open forests, woodlands, lantana thickets, heathlands and shrubby watercourses. Common. Eastern mainland Australia and south-eastern SA.

Notes: Isolation on Stradbroke Is has favoured the establishment of a golden colour phase which is particularly frequent on South Stradbroke and now sporadically recorded from the northern Gold Coast to the Nerang State Forest. No other local wallaby is as dark on the back or as ginger on the belly, or has a white-tipped tail; no similar species.

Threats: Dogs.

Traces: Droppings round and coarse (25 mm diameter); green grass is compressed into a long cigar shape (6 cm long by 18 mm wide).

Courtesy of Queensland Museum

Saving Straddie's Flying Foxes

NO ME, NO TREE. This is the plea of one of our most misunderstood mammals, the flying fox. Unknown to most, the flying fox is an incredible pollinator, and without them, the eucalypt forest on Straddie might not be dense, or so varied.

But we tend to overlook this, and associate them instead with diseases such as the Hendra virus and Lyssavirus and their rather noisy squabbling at sunset.

Flying foxes are mammals, and their winged hands are greatly extended bones of their forearms joined with a soft flexible membrane to form wings. They are marvellous flyers, and very manoeuvrable in the air. Flying foxes can weigh up to 1kg and have a wingspan of 1m. The flying foxes feed on flowers, fruit and the leaves of over 100 native trees and vines.

There are three species of flying fox that visit or live on Straddie; the black flying fox, the grey headed flying fox and the little red flying fox. The flying foxes are nomadic and prefer to colonise near water. The little red flying fox shifts camp every 1-2 months. Flying foxes sometimes fly in from the mainland at dusk to feed; they can cover up to 50 km in a night. Being such social animals they have a lot to say, and have more than 30 different calls and are most vocal during the mating season. You may hear them more than usual at the moment, as many flying foxes are attracted to the melaleucas, which are currently flowering.

We see flying foxes when they join the commuter rush at dusk, flying against a backdrop of fading blue sky when they are off to do their job as forest makers. In their travels, flying foxes disperse seeds in their droppings and carry a dusting of pollen from tree to tree, fertilizing flowers as they feed.

Eucalypts rely heavily on these pollinators, and so produce most of their pollen and nectar at night. Without the flying foxes, there is less cross pollination between trees. With their droppings, the seed dispersal can be spread over larger distances, not only expanding the gene pool within the forest, but also increasing the seed's chance of growing into a strong mature plant by germinating well away from the parent plant.

According to Emma Lewis from the UQ research station at Dunwich, the flying fox is under serious threat with some species, such as the little red flying fox threatened with extinction. In fact, the total population of the grey headed flying fox has been seen to drop by one third in ten years.

Emma notes that the most serious threats to the flying fox are habitat destruction, land clearing for agriculture and urban development. Sadly, barbed wire injuries are also common, tearing their fragile wings. Cocos palms are a trap in which they get entangled and can choke on their seeds. Of course the power lines are a big risk, and we regularly see the sad sight of them caught and hanging from the lines. People shoot them too.



The future of flying foxes depends on our willingness to share our neighbourhoods with them. Each of us can play a role in ensuring their survival. You can help by planting local native trees, and by stretching nets as tightly as a trampoline over your fruit trees, as loose nets injure wildlife horribly. Consider using white thick knitted net instead of the black thinner net.

It is important to note that living close to a colony is not a health risk, unless you are bitten or scratched. If you find an injured flying fox or bat do not handle it. There could be a baby attached. It may well bite you if frightened and hurt and may be carrying a disease. If you do find an injured animal call:

- Bat Rescue Inc Brisbane 07 3321 1229
- RSPCA hotline 1300 ANIMAL

Sincere thanks to Emma Lewis at the UQ research centre Dunwich for her help and the photograph of the orphaned baby greys. She is the official bat rescuer on NSI. ♦ Angela McLeod

The Samarinda Drive saga – development proposal defeated, but where is the management plan ?

One of FOSI's important roles over the years has been in town planning issues. Unfortunately, town plans are often unclear and sometimes contradictory, leading to disagreements over interpretation.

In the early 1990's, FOSI, SIMO and others objected to the Samarinda and Whalewatch development proposals. In 1994, approval for the proposed developments was given in the Planning and Environment Court. However, approval was subject to conditions which required part of the land (several thousand m²) to remain undeveloped, with the vegetation to be protected.

In 1999, , for some unknown reason the then Council approved a further subdivision, excising this vegetation protection area. Although the whole area is zoned 'conservation' in the latest town plan (which came into force after the court orders of the 1990's), that zoning, surprisingly, does not prohibit dwelling houses, which are designated as 'code assessable'.

The subdivided lot, containing 4,119 m² and with ocean views, was sold in 2007 for \$15,000. The purchaser was a company, with a director who was also a director of the original developer. Soon after, the purchaser sought Council approval for a dwelling house.

In 2008 the Council refused the application. The developer appealed. It then amended its plans to comply with the codes. The Council then approved the application, but with a condition that it could not be built as long as the previous Court orders prohibiting development remained in force. The developer then argued that this condition was beyond the Council's powers. The argument, in essence, was that the subsequent subdivision of the land, the new town plan and the new Sustainable Planning Act resulted in the

purchaser being entitled to approval of its dwelling house plans without restriction.

In October, 2011, FOSI and SIMO successfully applied to join the case to support the Council's prohibition condition. FOSI and SIMO also sought a declaration that the previous court orders prevent the land being built on. The appeal was heard in the Brisbane Planning and Environment Court on 26 October, 2011.

The court's judgement was handed down on 22 February, 2012. The developer's appeal against the Council's condition of approval relating to the 1994 conditions failed. At paragraph 51:- *"...Insofar as the words in the 1994 conditions are concerned, I consider them to be unequivocal and clear in their meaning. They should be read literally and are capable of being read that way. There is no ambiguity or inconsistency. The words mean what they say. I cannot conceive, for example, a difficulty in construing a clear meaning from expressions such as "shall be protected and retained" or "no further development being permitted within this area".*

The Court concluded that the 1994 conditions still attach to the land and prevented any further development.

The 1994 conditions also required, again in unequivocal and clear words, the Council to approve a management plan for the protection and enhancement of the protected area. It was to include revegetation. It appears that this has never been done – the land is infested with weeds. We have taken this up with our local councillor, Craig Ogilvie, and hope to report back to members in the near future..

Finally, we wish to thank our legal team, Richard Carew and Stephen Fynes-Clinton, on another successful outcome. ♦

BELOW: Trawler 'Nepal' with attendant terns.



Beach wrecked Albatross found on Main Beach

A rare and interesting event occurred in March 2012, when a Southern Buller's Albatross was found beach wrecked but alive on Main Beach. Despite the best efforts of Straddie wildlife carers Clare Milliken and Carol Hahn the injured bird did not survive. Its body has been preserved and will be sent to the museum for their collection.

There are only a few records of previous sightings of this bird at Stradbroke and it is only rarely seen on the pelagic birdwatching boat trips from the Gold Coast and the Sunshine Coast (only one was spotted in 2011). Buller's Albatross (*Thalassarche bulleri*) is a lightly built albatross with a spectacular wingspan of approximately two metres. They are New Zealand residents, breeding mainly on the Snares and Solander Islands in Southern New Zealand. It's thought that non-breeding birds disperse to oceanic subtropical waters of the western South Pacific, or to the Humboldt Current off the western South American coast. Buller's Albatross is listed as Vulnerable under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 and there is concern that the number of individuals visiting Australian waters could decrease substantially as the result of longline fishing bycatch mortality which is their major threat.

The finding of the beautiful Buller's Albatross on Main Beach is a reminder that North Stradbroke Island is an excellent locality for serious seabird watching: According to the aficionados, more rare and vagrant species of seabirds (birds which frequent coastal waters and the open ocean) have been found at Straddie than at any other terrestrial locality in Australia. One of the main reasons for this is



Stradbroke Island's unique geographical position lying close to the normal limits of distribution of both Northern tropical species and several Southern temperate and even sub-Antarctic species such as the Buller's Albatross. Seabirds regularly sighted include Crested Terns, Noddies, Brown Boobies and Lesser Frigatebirds, Australian Gannets and Shearwaters. Keen seabird watchers advise that 'Seawatching' from Point Lookout may be productive at any time of year although summer may be more rewarding. The best time of day to watch for seabirds is the mid to late afternoon and particularly when onshore winds have been blowing strongly. Another great reason to get out on the Point and ocean beaches after a storm with the binoculars and bird book! ♦

Mary Barram



Buller's Albatross found beach wrecked on Main Beach.

Note the nasal passages attached to the sides of the upper bill called naricorns. They also have a salt gland that is situated above the nasal passage and helps desalinate their bodies, due to the high amount of ocean water that they imbibe. It excretes a high saline solution from their nose

FRIENDS OF STRADBROKE ISLAND



Happy Easter!



ABOVE: Pied Oystercatchers, Spring high tide, Dunwich

Is your newsletter still arriving by post? If you'd prefer to receive it by email, please send your email address to Edith McPhee at emcphoe@westnet.com.au. Thank you. ♦

Check out our new blog! We've recently published many back editions to our blog at <http://www.fosi.org.au> ♦