

# 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, 2014: Individual \$15.00 Family \$20.00 Concession \$5.00**

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

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## Summer Shorebirds at NSI

Migratory bird numbers are peaking over late December as the last of the juvenile shorebirds arrive from their breeding grounds in Siberia and Central Asia. With its combination of muddy seagrass tidal wetlands, sandy habitats and rocky shores NSI provides great feeding opportunities for a wide range of visiting shorebirds.

Birds to look for include Eastern Curlew, with its giant curved beak, Whimbrel and Bar-tailed Godwit.

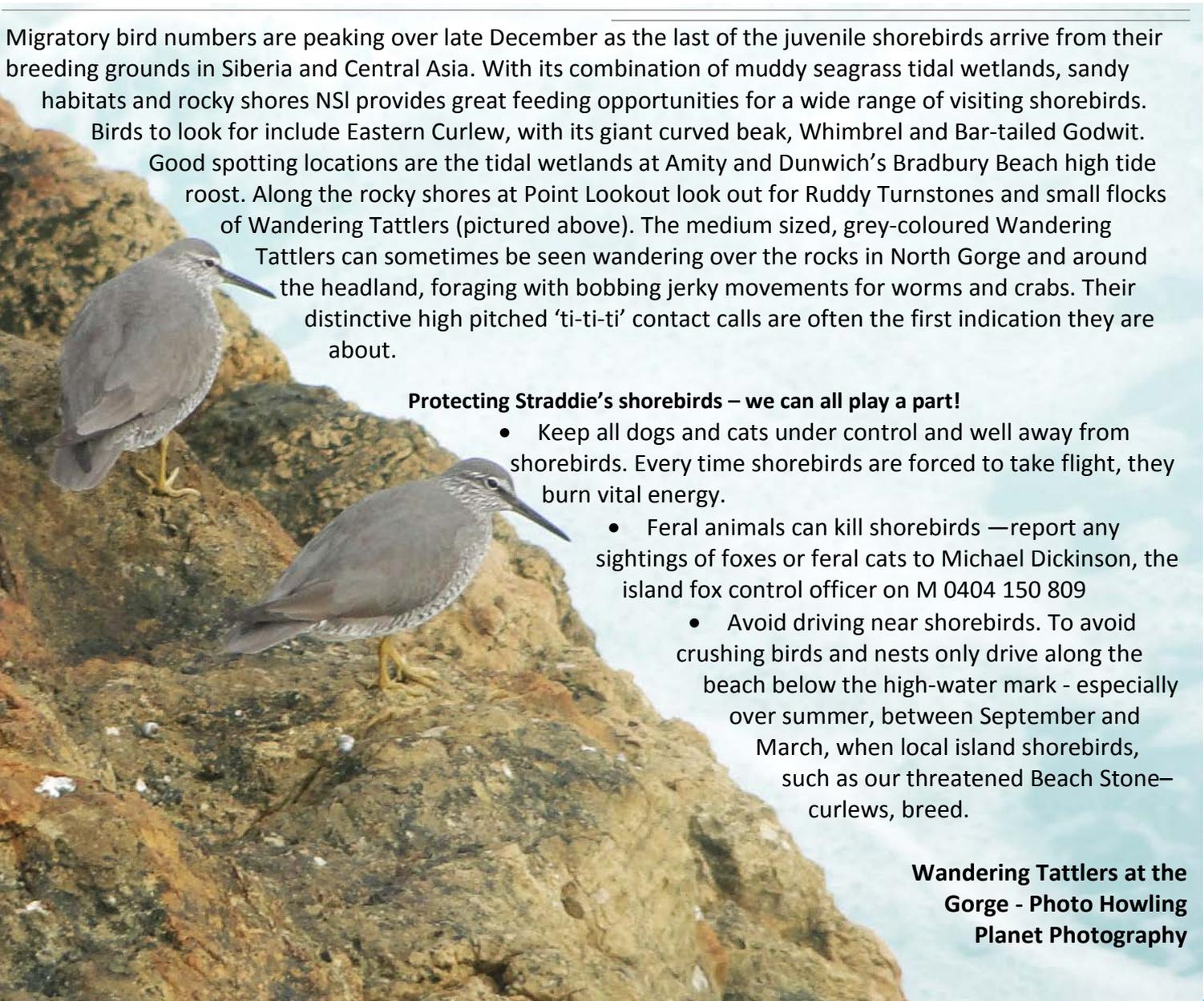
Good spotting locations are the tidal wetlands at Amity and Dunwich's Bradbury Beach high tide roost. Along the rocky shores at Point Lookout look out for Ruddy Turnstones and small flocks of Wandering Tattlers (pictured above). The medium sized, grey-coloured Wandering

Tattlers can sometimes be seen wandering over the rocks in North Gorge and around the headland, foraging with bobbing jerky movements for worms and crabs. Their distinctive high pitched 'ti-ti-ti' contact calls are often the first indication they are about.

### Protecting Straddie's shorebirds – we can all play a part!

- Keep all dogs and cats under control and well away from shorebirds. Every time shorebirds are forced to take flight, they burn vital energy.
- Feral animals can kill shorebirds —report any sightings of foxes or feral cats to Michael Dickinson, the island fox control officer on M 0404 150 809
- Avoid driving near shorebirds. To avoid crushing birds and nests only drive along the beach below the high-water mark - especially over summer, between September and March, when local island shorebirds, such as our threatened Beach Stone-curlews, breed.

**Wandering Tattlers at the Gorge - Photo Howling Planet Photography**



## Moreton Bay Research Station Open Day

FOSI held a combined event with Birds Queensland's Wader Study Group at the Moreton Bay Research Station Open Day in November. Sheryl, Dianne and Virginia from the Wader Study Group set up spotting telescopes on the lawn across the road so visitors could take a closer look at birds on the wetland. Luckily, an impressive 40 Pied Oystercatchers were sitting up very nicely on the high tide roost at Bradburys Beach,

right in front of the station! Helpful student volunteers donned the giant (and very hot) Eastern Curlew costume contributed by Joel from SEQ Catchments. In the mean time Mary and Sue Ellen from FOSI handed out dog leashes and brochures from our stall upstairs and even had a go at presenting a short kamishibai play (Japanese paper theatre), to a group of children about Tom the Red-necked Stint's first migration

from Siberia to Moreton Bay's wetlands. There was a lot of interest in the spotting scopes and stall. The free dog leashes – to keep dogs under control on the beaches and away from birds and other wildlife - were especially popular. Our thanks to the dedicated Wader Study Group volunteers who do so much to conserve Moreton Bay's shorebirds - we hope to undertake more joint activities in the future.



*Bradburys beach high tide roost - shorebird haven*

## Goompi Trail walk



Another highlight of the Moreton Bay Research Station Open Day in November was the opportunity to go on the Goompi Trail walk led by local Nunuccal man Matthew Burns. During the hour long walk along the foreshore of Goompi (Dunwich) Matt explored aspects of Quandamooka culture and island history including traditional hunting methods, bush tucker and medicines. A highpoint was seeing the remains of a huge midden and the ancient rock fish trap in Moreton Bay off Polka Point. This is a highly recommended experience. Contact Goompi Trails on 0400 792 243 to book a walk.

**Matt Burns on the Goompi Trail discussing the properties of the Soap Tree *Alphitonia excelsa* - Moreton Bay Research Station Open Day November 2014**

Mary Barram

# WANTED for crimes against Straddie wildlife.



Fox photographed on Sibelco's southern sand mining lease (Sand Times 2013)

## FOXES DON'T BELONG ON STRADDIE. ZERO TOLERANCE!

A well-resourced ongoing fox eradication program involving all island landholders is the only way to reduce the fox population from 2000 to ZERO. Other islands have removed ferals and saved their native animals. Stradbroke should be another success story!

**Please report all fox sightings. Phone 0404 150 809.**

Friends of Stradbroke Island. [www.fosi.org.au](http://www.fosi.org.au) Facebook save straddie



**Turtle nests on beaches are at risk over summer. Foxes are the main land based predator of sea turtles, raiding nests and eating the eggs. Please report all fox sightings to help give the baby turtles a better chance of survival!**

## Urban Koala Survey 2014

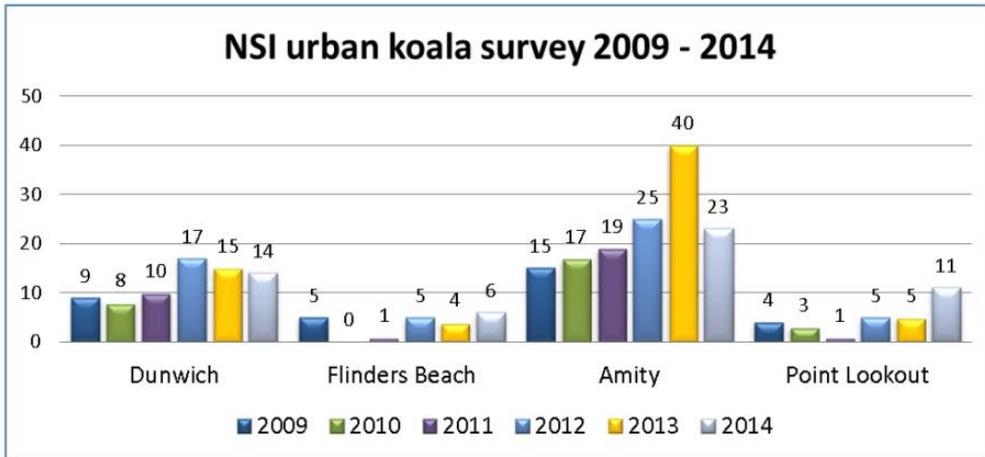
Results of this years Redland City Council's 6th annual koala survey have been released as a graph revealing some interesting figures. Although only a snapshot of Stradbroke's koala population since volunteers and council officers only count koalas on one day each year- this time October 11- it does suggest that numbers in urban areas have increased over the last 6 years. Last year koalas in our region were declared 'vulnerable' under the Federal EPBC Act and land clearing was cited as the major threat. As bushland habitat is cleared for

property development, or sand mining in the case of Stradbroke, koalas are forced into urban areas where traffic and dogs kill so many each year that numbers are in rapid decline in South East Queensland.

At 54 the total count for this year on the island is 10 down on last year's figure in contrast with the steady increase over previous years. The significant drop in numbers at Amity brings numbers in the township back to 2012 levels, so as council officers suggest this may merely represent visibility but other factors such as

cars, dogs and bushfire certainly cannot be excluded. On the other hand, at Point Lookout numbers have more than doubled from 5 over the previous two years to 11 this year, an increase consistent with anecdotal reports of more koalas. Any examination of reasons for this increase has to start with land clearing and the Yarraman mine, now only a short distance from the Point, is the area where this has been happening.

January's wildfires have presumably had an impact on the total island koala population but whether this is reflected in these figures is unclear. Interestingly though, research does indicate that after a severe bushfire koalas return to re-sprouting eucalypts to feed on new growth, holding out hope that numbers are rebuilding on the island. Next year's survey results will be worth watching for and members are encouraged to join the count which occurs in October each year.



**Koala Mooloomba Rd Point Lookout** - Koala breeding season is in full swing over summer. This is a time of increased activity and movement on the ground between trees, as males move around establishing territories, particularly from around November to January, and extra care should be taken when driving near koala habitat during this time particularly around all the townships, Myora and along the road to Amity. The breeding season commences around July-August and can extend through until April-May.

Sue Ellen Carew

## Squirrel gliders on Straddie

What a graceful, accomplished acrobat the Squirrel Glider is, effortlessly able to fly through the air for up to 50 metres, steering itself from tree to tree.



*Squirrel Glider feeding in a Dunwich garden - Photos by Scott Cornish*

As with many possums and gliders it features blue-grey fur, but is marked with a distinctive black stripe extending from between its big round eyes down to the middle of its back. Its tail is thick and bushy with a black tip, unlike its relative the Sugar Glider, found on the mainland, who sports a white tipped tail.

The average squirrel glider, weighs between 200-300 grams, and up to 18cm in length, with an equally long tail. Their ability to fly is due to stretched membranes between its front and back legs, which act like wings or sails, and enables it to swiftly glide long distances as it searches for insects and fruits to feed on.

Their habitat is primarily in old growth forests extending from North Queensland to West Victoria. As a result of habitat clearing, there has been a dramatic decline in their distribution throughout Australia; however abundant populations which need special recognition and protection have been located on the islands of North and South Stradbroke, Moreton, Fraser and Woogoompah in Moreton Bay.

A Squirrel Glider is a nocturnal gliding possum, spending most of the night in the top of tall trees and hidden inside a tree hollow during the day. For nesting, the gliders require up to 20 tree hollows of a certain size, only

found in trees at least one hundred and twenty years old, preferably with a narrow opening to protect them from invaders such as goannas, quolls, pythons and owls. They then line these hollows with eucalypt leaves to make a cosy nest.

Squirrel Gliders have a lifespan of 4-6 years and live in small groups, typically of one male and two females and their young. They have one or two offspring twice during the breeding season between June and January. Immediately when born, the baby will crawl into the pouch and anchor itself to a teat for three months. **Continued over...**

**...Continued from page 5**

The mother will then wean it at four months and it will stay in the nest for another 12-18 months before heading off on their own.

Sarah Bell, from the University of Queensland undertook research on squirrel gliders as part of her PhD. She installed nesting boxes on North Stradbroke Island and observed the behaviour of the species. There she noticed similar patterns emerging. An adult female lived in the box with two babies, with most of the day spent sleeping and grooming. At dusk, the mother left the nest to forage for food, returning at midnight to let the babies suckle for several minutes before leaving again and returning only at dawn. A few minutes after she had left each night, a male glider would enter the box and cuddle up to the young to keep them warm. He would stay for hours, leave for a few minutes, and then return again for a couple of hours. This was repeated throughout the night before he left at dawn to find his own hollow. Interestingly, on one occasion, another dominant male

entered the nest and the original male left, leaving the second male to babysit. Two males shared babysitting all night - oh how we ladies would like it if this happened in the human race!

The major threat to these endearing mammals is loss of habitat and life due to land clearing and bush fires. Feral cats, dogs and foxes also pose a serious threat. Gliders can become trapped by barbed wire fences when their flight membrane gets snared and exotic birds such as Indian Miners and feral honey bees compete for nesting hollows.

How can we help protect these beautiful gliders? The simplest action we can all do is ensure that all cats are kept indoors at dusk and overnight and each wears a large bell to provide Squirrel Gliders advance warning. A consistent eradication program by all island landholders to control foxes and feral cats will also help protect the gliders from these predators. On the mainland we can replace the top layer of a barbed wire fence with plain wire.

Although the Stradbroke's old growth forest habitats are in recovery after this year's bushfire crisis, the risk of wildfire to gliders remains so long as the mining company does not fulfil its environmental obligations to develop and implement a Fire Management Plan on the 50% of the island under mining leases.

A study has shown that gliders are doing very poorly in the island's post-mining 'reveg' areas, which lack large old trees. The only reveg areas gliders can survive in – even then in reduced numbers - are in a small area where artificial nest boxes have been installed. The installation and maintenance of nest boxes of different sizes suitable for gliders and other hollow nesting island animals such as lorikeets, owls and cockatoos should occur on all the existing reveg areas. But ultimately, the most important action is to conserve the island's eucalypt forests and woodlands, the habitat of the Squirrel Gliders, as well as other threatened island species such as koalas and Glossy Black Cockatoos. Clearing of forests for sand mining is the major threat to resident island gliders as the large trees they need for nesting will take over a century to regrow and develop hollows.

With sincere thanks to Dr Sarah Bell from the University of Queensland for the information from her study of Squirrel Gliders on North Stradbroke Island.

**Angela McLeod**



## Verdict on Sibelco's criminal charges due any day

On 22 August, 2014 the long running trial concluded. Sibelco was tried on two charges alleging it extracted non-mineral sand without permits. The Magistrate reserved his decision. The charges are related to the removal and sale of island sand to the building construction and landscape industries on the mainland.

An [ABC 7.30](#) Report in 2010 revealed:-

*"The Queensland Environment Department says 50 to 100 thousand tonnes of sand was illegally shipped off this island every year. Over 16 years, that means approximately a million tonnes has gone missing; sand that should have been used, according to critics, for rehabilitation".*

Sibelco has claimed it did not know that it needed development approval from the Redland City Council and permits under other State government legislation. But public servants gave evidence at the trial that Sibelco knew it did not have the required permits, falsely denied selling the sand and kept doing it even after it was told to stop.

Sibelco did pay a small percentage of its illegal profits as royalties, but this arrangement entered into with a Minister for Mines has never been subjected to scrutiny, as would be likely in New South Wales with ICAC. However, in a civil case brought by Sibelco in an attempt to avoid being charged, the Queensland [Court of Appeal](#) in 2010 said (at 58) that the payment of royalties was irrelevant to the legality. To do it lawfully, Council approval was required and that meant, at that time, public scrutiny and community objection and appeal rights – as occurred with the CRL construction sand case where objectors prevented the proposal proceeding.

Members will recall that two experienced criminal lawyers, one a former prosecutor and a QC, provided an opinion based on the evidence gathered by a very experienced independent investigator, formerly a high ranking officer with the Qld Criminal Justice Commission. The barristers advised that there was a prima facie case of stealing and fraud against Sibelco. Additional evidence pointing to dishonesty, a main ingredient of stealing and

fraud, was obtained by former EPA investigators when they executed a search warrant on Sibelco's offices in December, 2008. They seized incriminating internal emails and other documents.

The barrister's opinion was sent to the Attorney General, but to no avail. More recently, as revealed by ABC's [7.30](#), when evidence emerged that island sand was still being sold unlawfully, despite Sibelco being on trial, further attempts were made to persuade the Attorney General to send all the evidence to the Director of Public Prosecutions. But he refused.

Meanwhile, in November, 2013, in the middle of the trial, Sibelco, which must have spent millions of dollars on a pro-LNP [campaign](#) prior to the 2012 election, was the beneficiary of amendments to the North Stradbroke legislation. The campaign included 108 prime time television ads between February and April, 2012. The amendments removed the restricted mine path at the Enterprise mine and, if not repealed, will allow Sibelco to apply, in 2019, to extend mining to 2035.



**18 Mile Swamp- at risk from hydrological changes**



***Tiny Broad toed Feathertail Glider baby which died from injuries caused by a cat at Amity  
Photo Jack Jackson***

## **Quandamooka High Court challenge**

The legal challenge is unlikely to be heard by the High Court before June, 2015. This was announced at a directions hearing in Brisbane on 28 November, 2014.

QYAC's legal action seeks a declaration from the Court that the Newman government amendments to the North Stradbroke legislation are invalid under the Australian Constitution because they undermine the Federal Court's 4 July 2011 native title determination and the Indigenous Land Use Agreement with the State Government.

Native title rights are exercisable on the expiry of the mining leases.

When the former government, in April 2011, extended the Enterprise mining leases to 31 December, 2019, this was supposed to be the definite end date of the mine. No more extensions were to be permitted. The Indigenous Land Use Agreement between the State Government and QYAC was signed in June, 2011.

The November 2013 Newman government amendments removed the 2011 restricted mine path and, in 2019, allow Sibelco to apply to extend mining to 2035. These amendments allow the land to be further degraded and are

intended to postpone the exercise of the native title rights over this area of land.

Members will recall that FOSI published a [letter of support](#) to the Quandamooka Yoolooburrabee Aboriginal Corporation (QYAC) when the legal action was commenced in June 2014.

Let's hope that QYAC succeeds. However, in case it does not, we need to spread the word that the amendments should be repealed before 2019. Enough damage has been done to the Island.

## Updates

### EPBC Act investigation

The Federal Environment department's investigation into the Enterprise mine is continuing. The mine commenced in 2004 without approval under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999. Federal Government approval is required if internationally recognised wetlands are threatened by a mine. Dr Errol Stock, a geologist and an expert in the hydrology of North Stradbroke, has informed Federal Environment Department investigators that the Enterprise mine has already caused and is likely to cause further significant impacts to internationally recognised wetlands bordering the mine – areas, which are supposed

to be protected under the Ramsar treaty and the EPBC Act. About half of North Stradbroke is included in the [Moreton Bay Ramsar site](#), declared in 1993.

### Senate Inquiry into the Queensland Government

The Inquiry was set up with the support of the Federal ALP, the Greens and the Palmer United Party. FOSI lodged a detailed submission with the committee before the original November closing date for submissions. However the committee later extended the closing date to 27 February, 2014. As has been widely reported, the inquiry is not supported by the Federal coalition

or the State based LNP, but nor is it supported by the [Queensland ALP](#). The terms of reference permit serious issues to be raised, including about the mining industry and the practices of current and former Queensland governments, but with the emphasis on the Newman government. The inquiry is not the equivalent to an ICAC investigation in NSW, but in Queensland there is little else which may shine a light on the erosion of community objection and appeal rights and the lack of balanced decision making which reflects the importance of protection and conservation of our natural assets.



*Mineral sands on Stradbroke*



# Hasn't Straddie given enough? Isn't it time sand mining was stopped on this beautiful island?

Mining damage is no longer hidden. It is visible from both sides of the island – from the barge on Moreton Bay and from the gorge looking south over Main Beach. But the full extent of it can only be seen from the air.

Sand mining causes “major, permanent and irreversible environmental harm” – Fraser Island Inquiry 1976.

Scientists say the island’s ecological balance is at a tipping point after years of pressure from sand mining.

### What’s at stake?

North Stradbroke has the most diverse array of flora and fauna among the Moreton Bay islands – p.42 Qld Museum’s Wild Guide to Moreton Bay.

Under an LNP government, over 10 square kilometres of mostly undisturbed old growth Eucalypt forest and woodland will be cleared for mining at Enterprise mine – Qld Dept of Environment 2013.

Some of the world’s largest sand dunes, estimated by scientists to be 300,000 years old will be totally destroyed and the huge fresh water aquifer reserve beneath the island will be put at risk. Mining occurs below the water table.

Sand mines also damage areas outside leases – including internationally recognised freshwater lagoons and wetlands – Current investigation by Federal Environment Department.

The forests in the path of the Enterprise mine support a rich variety of wildlife within a complex biological system.

Nesting hollows for owls and gliders in old growth gums which take at least 120 years to form, will be destroyed.

Threatened species at risk from more mining include Koalas, Glossy Black Cockatoos, Pygmy Perch (rare freshwater fish), Wallum Froglet and three other “acid frogs”, and Swamp Orchids – All listed as threatened under Australian Federal Environment law.

### How can the onslaught of mining be held back?

In 2013 the Newman government passed amendments to the North Stradbroke Island Act which allow Belgian owned Sibelco to apply for an extension of sandmining to 2035. But the applications to extend cannot be made by the company until 2019. The Queensland Parliament can repeal the Newman amendments before 2019 – so anytime in the next 5 years.

### What you can do?

You can help by starting to spread the word that mining on Straddie can be stopped.

Email/facebook this ad to your contacts and urge your local member of Parliament that she or he can help bring about the repeal of the Newman amendments.



Friends of Stradbroke Island. [www.fosi.org.au](http://www.fosi.org.au) Facebook save straddie

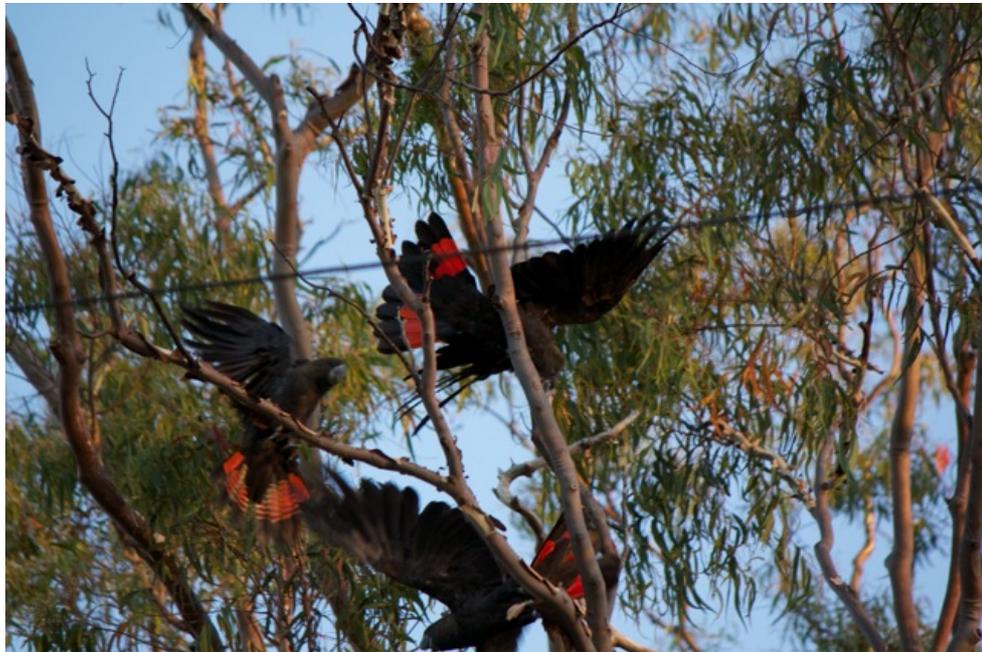
## Glossy Black Cockatoo Count 2014

The annual south east Qld Glossy Black Cockatoo Count occurred on October 19. FOSI members successfully searched a small part of the national park near Kaboora (Blue Lake) and identified two

active feeding trees - Black She-oak *Allocasuarina littoralis* - with recent orsts (distinctive crushed casuarina seed pods) strewn under several trees.

At dusk we checked a well-known watering site near Amity and counted 20 Glossy Black Cockatoos coming into water. Glossy Black Cockatoos are one of the island's special birds, listed as Vulnerable under the Nature Conservation Act (Qld). As they are finicky eaters AND hollow-dwellers, they face enormous challenges in order to survive.

The clearing of their habitat on the island for sand mining is the current number one threat as it removes not only their food but also old growth forest with large trees with big hollows for nesting. Number two threat is fire as she-oaks are particularly sensitive to high heat and may take years to recover, if they recover.



*White-bellied Sea Eagle soaring over Main Beach*



# Season's Greetings

and a

**Happy New Year to all FOSI members!**



*Another photograph of a marvellous Glossy Black Cockatoo*

## ----- How to Support FOSI's ongoing work -----

**Thank you very much** to all the generous members who have made donations to Friends of Stradbroke Island in the past.

We continue to highlight the increasing environmental damage caused by land clearing, sand mining, hydrological changes, plastic and feral animals on North Stradbroke Island.

Donations are integral to help fund our ongoing public information and education campaigns and to

help fund relevant scientific research.

All donations to the Environment Fund are **tax deductible** and may easily and securely be made by bank transfer to:

**FOSI Environment Fund -  
BSB 124029, Account 21645410**

Receipts will be mailed to donors so please remember to put your name on the transaction and follow up with an email to our Membership Secretary Edith McPhee

[emcphee@westnet.com.au](mailto:emcphee@westnet.com.au)