

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, 2013: Individual \$15.00 Family \$20.00 Concession \$5.00
Friends of Stradbroke Island, PO Box 167, Point Lookout QLD 4183.

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Left: Emerald Dove at Point Lookout

Australia Day storms brings seabirds onshore

Cyclone Oswald battered North Stradbroke Island over the Australia Day weekend knocking over trees, taking out the power and disrupting the ferries. However some keen birders who specialise in seawatching and love ocean-going pelagic birds were in their element (out in the wild winds on Point Lookout!). Cyclonic winds and storms blow seabirds – which mostly live well out to sea - onshore. On Australia Day, in just seven hours from 8am-3pm Colin Reid spotted a fantastic array of seabirds including Black-winged Petrel, White-necked Petrel, Streaked Shearwater, 1000s of Wedge-tailed Shearwater, Buller's Shearwater, Sooty Shearwater, Short-tailed Shearwater, Fluttering Shearwater, Hutton's Shearwater, Pomarine Skua, Arctic Skua and 27 Sooty Tern! Colin, who has seawatched at Straddie many times, said that it was 'one of the best we've ever had off Pt Lookout'. Sadly not all the seabirds survived the high winds. The rarely sighted White-tailed Tropic Bird pictured below was found barely alive on the Cylinder Headland but later died. Many carcasses of seabirds, mostly Shearwaters and Noddies, wrecked on beaches have been reported.



Above: Immature White-tailed Tropic Bird, Cylinder Headland.

(Photo courtesy of an island correspondent who has transported the specimen to the Qld Museum).

Mary Barram



Immature White-tailed Tropic Bird, Cylinder Headland.
 The two distinctive 40cm, ribbon like, central tail plumes which stream behind the adult birds have not yet grown. White-tailed Tropicbirds are ocean going birds which occur in the tropical Atlantic, western Pacific and Indian Oceans and breed on tropical islands (including Christmas Island). These birds are highly evolved to live at sea and only nesting adults are found on land. The birds feed on fish

and squid, caught by surface plunging, but this species is a poor swimmer. These birds are also unable to walk as their legs are located far back on their body, making walking impossible, so that they can only move on land by pushing themselves. Tropicbirds disperse widely across the oceans when not breeding, and sometimes wander far – even to Stradbroke Island.

The 2013 Stradbroke Chamber Music Festival

Date claimer 26 to 28 July

Artistic Director Rachel Smith returns from her music making in snowy climes to sunny Straddie to bring us an inspirational new program. Rarely performed chamber versions of the famous Sinfonia Concertante of Mozart in string sextet version and the septet version of Strauss's sublime Metamorphosen.

The string players include Rachel Smith, Louise King, Sophie Rowell, Caroline Henbest and returning from the Scottish Chamber orchestra, Eric de Wit.

Another special experience to enliven the imagination will be Montmorensy (pianist and singer

Paul Hankinson) performing in a Berlin- style piano cabaret at the surf lifesaving club.

Rachel and the musicians will return to Dunwich State School to energise the kids in their musical endeavours. Dunwich will also be the venue for a day of music starting with a lively animal- themed family concert on Sunday morning.

For those who have attended the festival in previous years this has become an unmissable annual event, for those who have yet to experience it make room in your calendar now! The weather is refreshing at that time of year. So cool walking weather and whale watching make it a great weekend.

NSI Field Guide Update



FOSI Secretary Angela McLeod and her cousin Penny recording notes for the Point Lookout walk from Adder Rock to Main Beach. During the research phase, each walk will be walked several times.

Work on FOSI's field guide to North Stradbroke Island is progressing well with the project on track. While the production of the field guide is being mostly funded by a fantastic donation from the Jani Haenke Memorial Trust, this is a community project which relies on the generous volunteer contributions of a large number of FOSI members and other people who care about Straddie. Thank you also to the FOSI members who have donated funds to assist with the costs of producing the field guide.



Members and local bush walkers have been hard at work researching the walks and natural areas to be described in the field guide.

Lee Curtis who is helping with the writing of the book has been working on the flora reference section containing around 120 plant photos and descriptions. Lee has also written drafts of the reference sections for the mammals and marine animals which are currently in the expert checking phase.

The bird reference section is well advanced with a good first draft completed and now also in the checking phase. An updated bird list for the island has been compiled and 150 of the most common or significant birds have been described with spotting notes. Thank you to the island birders who have contributed excellent local birding knowledge for the 'where to spot' sections. Many generous, bird-loving photographers have donated bird images for the guide, giving us the welcome – but stressful – job of having to choose which beautiful image to use!

If you have any queries about the field guide or would like to assist please contact Mary Barram at mbarram@bigpond.com

Lee Curtis hard at work. Lee is an experienced wildlife writer who regularly writes for Wildlife Australia Magazine. Lee was the project coordinator, chief editor and copywriter under contract to CSIRO Publishing for its comprehensive resource guide entitled: Queensland's Threatened Animals published in 2012

Mary Barram

'Hollow Promises'

The following article by Sue Ellen Carew, FOSI President was published in the Stradbroke Island News - Summer 2012

Sand mining continues to destroy old growth forests and animal habitat on Stradbroke

It may come as a surprise to many visitors holidaying on the island over summer to learn that North Stradbroke Island is still being mined. There are still three large active mines. The mining company, Sibelco, plans to close the Yarraman sand mine near Point Lookout in 2015. The giant Enterprise sand mine in the middle of the island – you can see it from the headland at Point Lookout – is currently allowed to keep working for another seven years until 2020, thanks to the former government's renewal of expired mining leases. The silica mine at Vance near the Amity turnoff, in prime koala country, is currently allowed to keep working until 2025.

The giant Enterprise and Yarraman mines work 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The company continues to lobby to be allowed to continue mining for even longer at Enterprise mine.

No Tree No Me! – Prime habitat is being destroyed

Sand mining is destroying essential habitat for island animals as large tracts of woodland filled with mature forest trees are cut down. These woodlands provide essential habitat for many of the island's native animals.

Island Koalas

Koala numbers are collapsing so rapidly in South-east Queensland that in April 2012 the Federal government declared the Queensland koala as a vulnerable threatened species needing protection under federal environmental law. To survive, koalas need large areas of healthy, safe and connected bushland. On the island, koala habitat (confirmed in pre-mining Environmental Impact Statements prepared by the mining company) is being destroyed by the mines. Photographs of koalas at the Vance mine are even being used by the mining company in recent PR materials!¹

Destruction of habitat

Many of the island's birds, mammals and reptiles need tree hollows for shelter, roosting and breeding.

They include the island gliders, microbats, owls, parrots, kingfishers and Glossy Black Cockatoos as well as many species of snakes, frogs and skinks. Some of these are threatened species. It takes a very long time for tree hollows to form. Generally, small hollows with narrow entrances suitable for small animals such as the Feathertail Glider and microbats take about 100 years to form. Tree hollows of a medium size and suitable for animals such as lorikeets, kookaburras and kingfishers will take around 200 years to form, and the larger and deeper hollows occupied by the island's iconic Southern Boobook owls and Glossy Black Cockatoos can take a lot longer – 250 years plus.

Rehabilitation doesn't work for these island animals - no naturally occurring hollows will form on any land mined on the island until at least the year 2090 and no tree hollows suitable for owls and Glossy Black Cockatoos will form naturally until around the year 2200. A few nesting boxes that need to be replaced every ten years are no substitute for the habitat being destroyed. The mining company will be long gone when the last artificial nesting box it puts up is eaten by termites and still no natural tree hollows will have formed.

The mining company has allowed foxes and wild dogs to run rampant over its leases

The mining company is the custodian of a large part of the island. In a recent company sponsored publication² Sibelco admitted that it has not undertaken any fox or wild dog control in any of its leases since 2004. Over the past eight years the company has stood back and allowed fox numbers to soar in disturbed land and beyond. Foxes are the most common animal picked by the company's few nocturnal 'wildlife' monitoring cameras at rehabilitation sites (according to a company spokesperson at a public meeting 26 September 2012). Foxes and wild dogs are a major threat to island koalas, which they attack when they are on the ground moving between trees, as well as the island's wallabies, bandicoots and birds. The birds at particular risk are the ground dwelling and nesting birds such as the endangered Beach Stone Curlew, the Double Banded Plover and Bush Stone Curlew.

The mining company has taken no steps to reduce road kill of koala and other native animals by its vehicles.

In the same recent company sponsored publication³ the company identified vehicle strike as a major threat to the island's koala population as well as to island macropods (kangaroos, wallabies, bandicoots etc.). **Yet the company has taken no action to reduce the death toll caused by its vehicles.**

Company vehicles are major road users on the island – buses ply the island morning and night after picking up Sibelco's largely mainland based workforce from the ferries, massive trucks carrying silica and minerals from the mines roar along the East Coast Road through sensitive koala habitat day after day and company flagged heavy 4wds are a feature of island roads. Sibelco – to show its concern and take responsibility for its part of the roadkill problem - should immediately impose compulsory speed limits

on all its workforce vehicles – buses, trucks and 4wds – of 50kms or lower on all the island paved roads, ensure that all its staff are trained as part of their induction in what to do if their vehicle strikes an animal and make some large unconditional donations to the island's hard pressed wildlife carers who care for animals struck by vehicles on the island.

¹ The Sand Times, Sept 2012, p 5''

² CRISTESCU, R., SMITH, P. et al , North Stradbroke Island: An Island Ark For Queensland's Koala Population?, "A Place of Sandhills: Ecology, Hydrogeomorphology and Management of Queensland's Dune Islands" (2011), Proceedings of the Royal Society of Queensland, Volume 117.p 326

³ op. cit. p326

Can Sibelco Hold Back The Gushing Waters?

Since October last year water has been gushing at an alarming rate from dunes and rushing through normally dry watercourses near the Yarraman mine. Yarraman is the nearest mine to Point Lookout and clearly visible from the headland lookouts.

New lakes have formed, where there were none, drowning areas of vegetation. The damage has occurred outside the mining lease in areas north of the well-known Keyholes. In January a number of FOSI members together with an scientific expert accompanied representatives of the traditional owners to inspect the off-lease water flows and environmental impacts.

The miner Sibelco appears to be locked in a battle to control the outflow from the island's sensitive hydrological system and aquifer. Miners have a long record of this kind of damage to the island with drowned forest and drained lakes as their legacy.

But.... this was not meant to happen again. The "science" had advanced, more knowledge meant more predictability and greater ability to control the waters that are necessarily encountered in deep dredge sand mining.

The consequences of months of sustained leaking from the island's sensitive hydrological system are probably unpredictable too. It remains to be seen if Sibelco presumably under the authority of its regulator, Queensland's Environment Department and Minister Powell, can find a solution and prevent a recurrence. Environmental damage to off-lease areas in fact contravenes the conditions of the mining lease.

The best solution naturally is to activate the precautionary principle and abandon the risky dredge mining before the litany of damage overwhelms Stradbroke's precious environment.



Sibelco on trial

On 1 March, 2013 a Brisbane Magistrate ordered that Stradbroke miner Sibelco Australia Limited pay the State's Environment Department an unprecedented \$254,687.00 in legal costs. What's it all about?

Sibelco is being prosecuted for two criminal offences for unlawfully removing Stradbroke island sand from the island and selling it for landscaping and other purposes without Redland Council approval.

The legal costs were incurred by the government department in successfully opposing several failed attempts by Unimin/Sibelco to stop the trial. Sibelco claimed that the criminal charges were an 'abuse of process'. The Magistrate rejected the claim.

On 1 March, the magistrate also dismissed the company's application that it had no case to answer on the two criminal charges being heard by the court. The trial is to continue later this year.

What has become a legal saga commenced on 16 December, 2008, when investigators from the former Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) executed a search warrant on the mining company's offices on North Stradbroke island. The company was then called Unimin Australia Limited. It changed its name to Sibelco Australia Limited in 2010.

The investigators seized computer and other records relating to Unimin's sale of island silica sand to the landscaping and building construction industries on the mainland.

The company's mining leases permit the taking of minerals and nothing else. Non-mineral sand is supposed to be used in the 'rehabilitation' of the mined areas. In 2010 the Environment Department

told the ABC's 7.30 Report that since 1993, 50,000 to 100,000 tonnes per year of non-mineral sand had been removed unlawfully and sold. The retail value of this sand has been estimated at \$80 million.

Sibelco was initially charged with three offences. The first alleges that it carried out assessable development (taking the sand) without the required local government approval. The second alleges that it carried out the same activity without being registered under the Environmental Protection Act. A third charge was dismissed last year because, curiously, the prosecution was not commenced until one day after the limitation period for bringing the charge had expired.

The trial finally commenced on 18 February, 2013, more than four years after the EPA seized evidence from the company's Stradbroke offices. The prosecution called over 30 witnesses over the following week and a half. The witnesses included EPA investigators, truck drivers who transported the sand, expert witnesses and the former head of Stradbroke Ferries, which transported the trucks carrying the non-mineral sand to the mainland. It is not yet known whether Sibelco will call witnesses when the trial resumes later this year.

Meanwhile, indigenous owners have renewed calls for the charges against Sibelco to be upgraded to stealing and fraud charges, in line with legal opinions from senior lawyers that there is a prima facie case against the company for those offences. Indigenous owners have also called for a federal government inquiry into unlawful sand mining practices on the island and the State government's handling of these issues.

Dead seabirds needed for plastic pollution study

Lauren Roman, a graduate ecology / zoology student from the University of Queensland is undertaking a study on plastic marine debris in the diets of Australian seabirds and shorebirds. Lauren's research for her honours thesis is being supervised by Dr Kathy Townsend based at the UQ Moreton Bay Research Station at Dunwich. To conduct the study in a way that is as ethical as possible and brings no stress or harm to living birds, the approach being used is to dissect birds that have already died of natural (or unnatural) causes.

Lauren is seeking assistance from FOSI members with the collection of suitable specimens. Lauren requests that if we find any dead marine birds (seabird/ shorebird/ gull/ heron/ egret etc) that are relatively intact, that we place them in a plastic bag and bring them to the Moreton Bay Research Station and ask for the specimen to be put in the freezer for her. We will report back to members on her study's findings.

Plastic Peril



Rubbish in the bathing gorge after a storm

Every bit of plastic every human has ever used is still somewhere on the earth!

Plastics can only break down into smaller pieces as they are attacked by U.V. and buffeted by the sea. These ever-smaller particles can actually pick up and concentrate chemical pollutants such as mercury and pesticides.

Plastics in the ocean are mistaken for food by seabirds, fish and turtles causing suffocation, blockages and death.

Tiny particles, now bearing an extra dose of chemicals, are digested by sea creatures and enter the food chain with unknown consequences for humans. In the North Sea micro-plastics, a constituent of cosmetic “exfoliants”, have been discovered in the internal organs of fish caught for human consumption.

Please re-examine your use of plastics and look for alternatives. After all, only 50 years ago we had no choice but to use glass, cloth, hessian, paper, cardboard, wood, metal and cane baskets.

FOSI members are well-placed, as they amble along our beautiful beaches, to gather up this unsightly and dangerous pollution. This is not the ultimate solution but it is a good practice to make some difference.

Let’s make an effort!

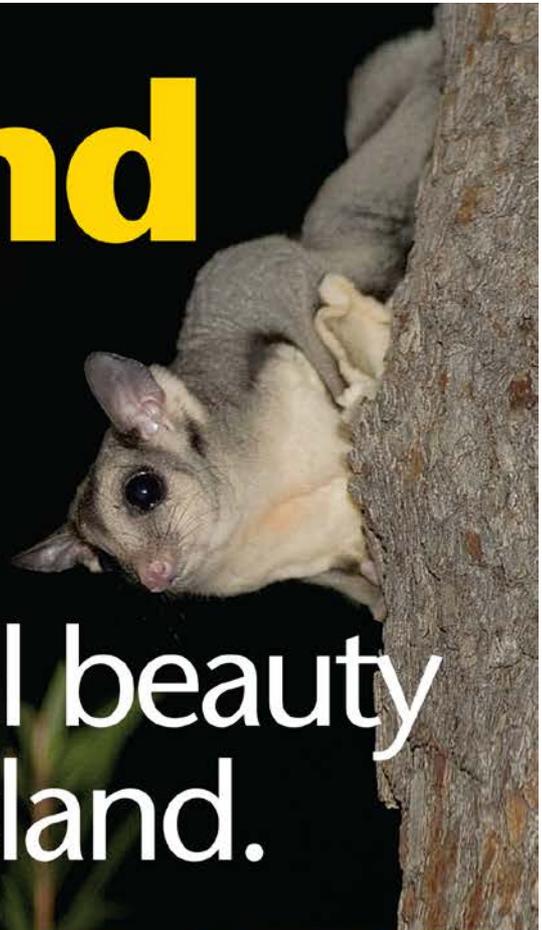


An immature Buff Banded Rail at Flinders Beach wetlands

Bruce Martin

Stop sand mining.

Save the natural beauty of Stradbroke Island.



Australia's best loved national icons – cockatoos, gliders and koalas - all live on Stradbroke Island, finding shelter and food in the Island's old forests, tree hollows and eucalypt trees. But development, including the continuous clearing of forest to accommodate extensive sand mining, has put the Island's unique biodiversity under increasing pressure.

You may have heard that the sand mining on Stradbroke Island has stopped....

...It hasn't. Mining is being allowed to continue for many years on the island.

There are three large active mines on Stradbroke Island. The Yarraman mine near Point Lookout will close in 2015, but the life of the giant Enterprise mine in the middle of the island has been extended to 2020 and the silica mine until 2025.

Mining activity is destroying acres of precious old eucalypt forest...

...forests which provide food for koalas and shelter for our native species.

Large tracts of woodland with mature forest trees are being cut down as part of the sand mining activity. The hollows that form in these trees take hundreds of years to develop, and provide essential habitat and breeding grounds for many of the island's birds, mammals and reptiles. The lengthy process for trees to mature means that no naturally occurring hollows will form on any mined land until the year 2090; put simply, revegetation is not an option.

According to the CSIRO, koala populations have declined by an estimated 80 per cent in southeast Queensland since the mid 1990s, due mostly to vegetation clearance. Their decline has become so alarming that Federal Minister Tony Burke in 2012 listed them as a 'vulnerable' species under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act. On North Stradbroke Island, their precious habitat and food is still being cleared.

The risk just isn't worth it...

...Stop sand mining on Stradbroke Island.



SAVE STRADDIE.COM
NATIONAL PARK - NOT MINING!



Visit www.savestraddie.com for more information about the need to protect the wilderness of Stradbroke Island.



Getting to know your Shorebirds

Let us introduce you to the special shorebirds of North Stradbroke Island and Moreton Bay with BirdLife Australia.

Learn more about shorebirds: their 10,000 km trip to get here, the threats they face and how we can give them a helping hand.

This *free* one day workshop is open to everyone interested in shorebirds, and includes:

- ❖ A presentation by BirdLife Australia's Shorebirds 2020 project manager on the feats of shorebird migration and the amazing adaptations of our resident shorebirds.
- ❖ A course and quiz to get you started or refreshed on shorebird ID and counting.
- ❖ A field trip to convince you that shorebirds don't all look the same...
- ❖ A goodie bag with a starter kit to the nationwide monitoring program Shorebirds 2020.
- ❖ Refreshments and lunch provided.

Registrations essential - please **RSVP** by 2nd April to Cheryl Bolzenius, WetlandCare Australia

T: (07) 3286 6194

M: 0438 733 563

E: cherylb@wetlandcare.com.au

WHEN:

- ❖ Saturday, 6th April 2013
- ❖ 9:00 am – 4:30 pm

WHERE:

- ❖ Little Ship Club
1 Yabby Street, Dunwich
North Stradbroke Island
- ❖ Field trip to a nearby shorebird area after lunch (please tell us if you require transport)

WHAT TO BRING:

- ❖ Binoculars, sturdy footwear, water bottle, sun-smart gear



The amazing bar-tailed godwit can fly more than 10,000km without stopping. Photo: Adam Gosling



CARING
FOR
OUR
COUNTRY



Above: With your friends and neighbours, you're the richest man in town! Grey Kangaroos in a vacant allotment

Make a tax-free donation to help Straddie!

Donations to FOSI's environment fund are now tax-deductible. So we'd like to ask for members' help to raise some funds for our activities in 2013.

We'd like members to consider making a donation with their annual membership fee. For example for a single you could pay \$15 membership and make a \$35 donation (\$50 in all). Or for a family membership you could pay a \$20 membership and a \$80 donation (\$100 in all).

Of course, bigger donations are always welcome! We are extremely grateful to the generous souls who have donated large and small sums over the years to allow FOSI to work to keep North Stradbroke Island a special place today and in the future! Thankyou everyone!

Return to paper newsletters

That's right it's back to the future for FOSI. We've decided to start printing our newsletters again and mailing them to members. That is because members told us the newsletters were getting lost in the email junk cramming their inboxes! So help us make the most of the return to paper by putting your copy of the newsletter where as many people as possible can read it and keep up to date with what is happening on our beautiful island! If your friends and family like what they see why not encourage them to become a member of FOSI?

The printed newsletters are black and white but that really doesn't do justice to the lovely photos our dedicated members contribute. We recommend checking out the full colour PDF we will still email so you may see the photographs in all their glory!

If you aren't currently receiving the newsletter by email and would like to, please send your email address to Edith McPhee at emcphree@westnet.com.au. Thank you.